# FRANCE
## FROM
# BEHIND THE VEIL

COUNT PAUL VASSILI

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# FRANCE FROM BEHIND THE VEIL

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

**BEHIND THE VEIL AT THE RUSSIAN COURT**

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*From the painting by Cabanel.*

NAPOLEON III.

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# France from Behind the Veil: Fifty Years of Social and Political Life

BY
COUNT PAUL VASSILI

Illustrated

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

WHILE this volume has been passing through the press certain of the personages still living at the time Count Vassili was at work on the manuscript of "France from Behind the Veil" have passed away.

Also, incidents have occurred which are a reflex of matters mentioned in these pages.

In such instances the publishers have thought well to bring the manuscript right up to date, leaving the reader to understand that events happening in 1914, and therefore subsequent to the Count's death, have been so treated.

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# France from Behind the Veil

## CHAPTER I

### Last Days of the Empire: Napoleon and Eugénie

Towards the end of the year 1868 I arrived in Paris. I had often before been in the great city, but had never occupied any official position there. Now, however, having been appointed secretary to our (Russian) embassy, I consequently enjoyed special privileges, not the least being opportunity to watch quite closely the actors in what was to prove one of the greatest dramas of modern history. I had many acquaintances in Paris, but these belonged principally to the circle known still by the name of Faubourg St. Germain, for I had never frequented the Imperialistic world. Consequently I found myself thrown in quite a different *milieu*, and had to forgo a great many of my former friends, who would not have cared to receive in their houses one who now belonged to the intimate coterie of the Tuileries. In a certain sense I felt sorry; but on the other hand I discovered that the society in which I now found myself was far more pleasant, and certainly far more amusing, than my former circle. To a young man such as I was at that time, this last consideration, of course, was most attractive.

Paris, during that autumn of the year 1868, was extremely congenial; indeed, it has never been so brilliant since the

Napoleonic Eagle disappeared. The Sovereigns liked to surround themselves with nice people, and sought popularity among the different classes of society; they gave splendid receptions, and did their best to create around them an atmosphere of luxury and enjoyment. They frequented the many theatres for which Paris was famed, were present at the races, and in general showed themselves wherever they found opportunity to appear in public. During the summer and autumn months the Imperial hospitality was exercised with profusion and generosity, either at Compiègne or at Fontainebleau, and it was only at St. Cloud or at Biarritz that the Emperor and his lovely Consort led a relatively retired life, while they enjoyed a short and well-earned holiday.

As is usual in such cases, the Imperialistic society followed the lead given to it from above, and pleasure followed upon pleasure, festivity crowded upon festivity during these feverish months which preceded the Franco-Prussian War. In 1868 the clouds that had obscured the Imperial sky at the time of the ill-fated Mexican Expedition had passed away, and the splendours which attended the inauguration of the Suez Canal were already looming on the horizon.

The political situation as yet seemed untroubled; indeed, though the Emperor sometimes appeared sad and anxious, no one among all those who surrounded him shared the apprehensions which his keen political glance had already foreseen as inevitable. The Empress, too, appeared as if she wanted to make the most of her already disappearing youth, and to gather her roses whilst she still could do so, with all the buoyancy of her departed girlish days.

The leading spirit of all the entertainments given at the Tuileries, the Princess Pauline Metternich, was always alert for some new form of amusement wherewith to enliven the

house parties of Compiègne, or the solemnity of the evening parties given in the old home of the Kings of France—that home from which Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette had gone to the scaffold, and to which their memory clung in spite of all those who had inhabited it since the day they started upon their tragic journey to Varennes.

The fair Eugénie had a special reverence for the memory of the beautiful Austrian Archduchess whose destiny it had been to die by the hand of the executioner within a few steps of the grand old palace that had been hers. With all the impressionability of her Spanish nature she used to say that she was sure a like fate awaited her, and so prepared herself to die as had died the unfortunate Princess whose place she had taken. Eugénie often spoke of what she would do when that day should come, and sometimes amused her friends with her conviction that she, too, was destined to endure tragic misfortunes and calamities. Her presentiments were fulfilled; but, alas! she did not bear them with true dignity.

At the time of which I am speaking—October, 1868—Napoleon III. had just completed his sixtieth year. In spite of the agonies occasioned by the painful disease from which he was suffering, he retained his good looks, and notwithstanding his small height and the largeness of his head, which, compared with the size of his body, would have been ridiculous in any other person, he presented a most dignified appearance, and bore himself like a Sovereign born to the purple would have done. When he chose, the expression of his face was charming, and the eyes, which he always kept half closed, had a dreamy, far-away, mysterious look that gave them a peculiar charm. He spoke slowly, as if carefully weighing every word he uttered; but what surprised one when talking with him for the first time was a German accent in

speaking French—a habit retained from his early days spent in Switzerland—from which he could not rid himself, in spite of all his efforts, as well as those of M. Mocquard, his faithful secretary and friend, who, so long as he lived, gave him lessons in elocution. I believe that the slowness with which Napoleon III. expressed himself must be attributed to that circumstance more than anything else. But it is a fact that sometimes it had the effect of irritating those with whom he was engaged in conversation; they never knew what he was going to say next, and ofttimes gathered the impression that some ulterior motive actuated his speech.

With ladies the Emperor was always charming, and his manner with them had a tinge of chivalry that savoured of olden times, and generally succeeded in winning for him all that he wanted. His love intrigues were numerous, and his wife was not always wrong when she complained, though not improbably she would have done better to notice and talk of them less than she did. In general the Empress was much too fond of communicating her feelings and impressions to those whom she considered her friends without the slightest reason for thinking them to be such. Her many intimacies with ladies who bore her no real sympathy, such as Princess Metternich, for instance, did her much harm and caused her many annoyances which she could well have avoided had she shown herself more careful in what she did or said. She never realised that community in amusement does not constitute community of feelings, and that whilst one may like the society of some people because one enjoys their good dinners, or spends one's time pleasantly in their company, it does not mean that one really cares for them, or trusts them.

Napoleon III. had been a very clever politician. I use

the words "had been" intentionally, because, unhappily, it is certain that toward the end of his reign he had lost some of his former sharpness. Neither did he see so plainly the dangers of his situation, nor realise that he could not act as freely as he had done at the time of the *coup d'état* of December, 1852, and during the Crimean and Italian campaigns.

He felt himself weakened, in part through the mistakes of his early youth, as well as by his associations, which were beginning to tell upon him, and of which he had a nervous dread of being reminded. As an example of this the following anecdote is typical. A Russian lady, the Countess K——, who used to frequent the Tuileries, met one day an Italian statesman, whose name I won't mention as he is still living. This gentleman suddenly asked whether it would not amuse her to frighten the Emperor. She was young and giddy, and accepted with enthusiasm. He then told her that at the next fancy ball that was going to take place at the Naval Office, the Sovereigns were to attend as the guests of the Marquis and the Marquise de Chasseloup Laubat. The lady was to approach Napoleon and to whisper in his ear the name of an Italian then in Paris, and to remind Napoleon of an interview he had had with him in a small inn near Perugia. No explanations were given to the lady, and she never asked for any, but when the ball took place she managed to approach the Emperor, who was present in a domino, and to murmur in his ear the phrase given her, without, it must be owned, attaching any special importance to it. Napoleon's face became white, and, seizing her hand, he asked her, in an agitated voice, to tell him from whom she had obtained this information. The Countess was terrified, and replied that a domino had whispered it to her during the ball. The Emperor plied her with questions, but to

no purpose, as his extreme emotion had put her on her guard. Two days later, to her surprise, she was invited to dine at the Tuileries. When the meal was over, the Empress, who had been unusually gracious, called her to her side, and taking care no one should hear them, asked her to explain from whom she had heard the incident to which she had alluded during her conversation with the Emperor, at the ball of Madame de Chasseloup Laubat. The Countess, though taken quite unawares, persisted in her assurance that she did not know the domino who had imparted it to her; that she was now very sorry for heedlessly repeating words to which she had attached no importance. Eugénie pressed her again and again, and at last exclaimed with impatience, as she rose from her chair: "People like to be asked to the Tuileries, but do not seem to consider that it is a grievous want of tact to hold converse with the enemies of the Sovereign whilst doing so." "And," added the Countess when she related to me this anecdote, "from that moment I was watched at every step by the secret police, and to this day I do not know why I was chosen as the instrument to deal such a blow to Napoleon III."

I have related this anecdote to prove how very much the Emperor dreaded all that related to his first steps in political life, under the patronage of the Carbonari and other secret associations that were working towards the unification of Italy. He did not feel himself a free agent in that respect; no one knew exactly why, because he never expressed himself on the subject—but it is certain that some of the most unexpected things he did had their source in this mysterious influence which made him appear to be more or less averse to thwarting the desires of his former Italian friends.

Napoleon was not brilliant by any means; but he was

certainly clever, though sometimes lacking in initiative. It is not likely that he would ever have had the courage either to escape from Ham, or to overthrow the second Republic, had he not been emboldened in the first of these attempts by Conneau, and in the second by Morny and Fleury, together with the active Maupat. He lived under the spell of the Napoleonic tradition, and being before everything else a fatalist, he thought himself destined to ascend the throne which his uncle had conquered. He never fought against destiny, and so acquired an apathy which totally unfitted him for any unexpected struggle. At Sedan he surrendered with hardly a murmur, as, though he well knew the step to be a fatal one, he had tolerated MacMahon's fatal occupation of that fortress. He had lost all faith in his future, and he had given up the game long before he handed his sword to the conqueror.

The Emperor's was essentially a kind nature. During the eighteen years of his reign he did an enormous amount of good, and certainly France owes to him a good deal of her present prosperity. He thought about his people's welfare more than had any previous Sovereign; the economic question was one to which he had given his most earnest attention. He wanted his country to be strong, rich, an example to others in its energetic progress along the path of material and intellectual development. He was a lover of art; he was a keen student, an admirer of literature; and he appreciated clever men. Catholic in his tastes, he had the rare faculty of forgetting the wrongs done to him, in the remembrance of the many proofs of affection he had experienced. Gifted with a sweet and sunny temperament, he had been brought up in the school of adversity. Amidst all the grandeur that he enjoyed later on, he never forgot the lesson; and when misfortune once more assailed him, he was never

heard to murmur, or to reproach those whose incapacity had destroyed his life's work.

Socially, Napoleon never forgot that the first duty of a monarch is ever to appear to be amiable. Whenever he swerved from that axiom it was always for some very good reason. He had great tact, and possessed to perfection the art of invariably saying the right thing in the right place. Yet he knew very well how to differentiate between persons, and to accord the exact shade of behaviour towards an Ambassador or to an Attaché, to a simple tourist, or to a foreign personage entrusted with a mission of some kind.

He was entirely interesting in all his remarks, and always conversant with the subject about which he spoke. Though he had pretensions to scientific and historical knowledge, he was not at all a well-read man in the strict sense; but he had a wonderful faculty of assimilating all that he read, and after having quickly run through a book, was at once acquainted with its principal points or defects. Sceptical in his appreciations, and perhaps in his beliefs, he had the utmost respect for the convictions of his fellow creatures, and though by no means a religious man, reverenced religion deeply. His faults and errors, in the political sense, proceeded more from the influence of his immediate entourage than from his own appreciation of right and wrong. In many things he deserves to be pitied, and in many of his mistakes he was the scapegoat of those who threw their blame upon his shoulders—a blame that either from indifference or from disdain he accepted without a murmur.

Paradoxical as it may seem to say so, he knew humanity, but not the people with whom he lived. He never expected gratitude, and yet he believed that the men upon whom he had showered any amount of benefits would feel grateful to him. To the last hour of his life he thought that his

dynasty had some chance to recover the throne; and he remained convinced of the fidelity of his partisans in spite of the many proofs that he had to the contrary. His many illusions proceeded from the kindness of his nature, a kindness that never failed him, either in prosperity or in disaster.

I was introduced to Napoleon III. at Compiègne. I had been invited there, together with the Russian Ambassador, in the course of the month of November that had followed upon my appointment in Paris. We assembled before dinner in what was called the Salle des Gardes, a long apartment panelled in white, to which a profusion of flowers, scattered everywhere, gave a homely look. We were a very numerous company, and it was on that evening I became acquainted with many leading stars in the Imperial firmament. We did not have to wait long before a door was opened and an *huissier* called out in a loud voice: "L'Empereur!"

The Sovereigns entered the room, the Empress slightly in front, Napoleon following her with the Princess Clotilde on his arm. He began at once to talk with the members of the Corps Diplomatique, whilst his Consort approached the ladies gathered together at one end of the vast hall. When my Ambassador presented me, Napoleon asked me whether I was the son "of the lovely Countess Vassili" he had known in London, and when I replied to him in the affirmative he at once began to talk about my mother, and the many opportunities he had had to meet her. "I am glad to see you here," he added, "and I hope you will enjoy your stay in France."

The Empress on that day, when I beheld her for the first time, did not strike me as so absolutely beautiful as I had been led to expect. Later on I found out that her greatest attraction was in the varying charm of her expressive face. The features were quite lovely in their regularity, but a

certain heaviness in the chin robbed them of what otherwise would have been absolute perfection. The mouth had a curve which told that on occasion the Empress could be very hard and disdainful, but the eyes and the hair were glorious, the figure splendid, and she had an inimitable grace in her every movement. With the exception of the Empress Marie Feodorovna of Russia, I have never seen anyone bow like Eugénie, with that sweeping movement of her whole body and head, that seemed to be addressed to each person present in particular and to all in general. On that particular evening she was a splendid vision in evening dress. Her white shoulders shone above the low bodice of her gown, and many jewels adorned her beautiful person. But though she excited admiration she did not at first appeal either to the senses or to the imagination of men. At least, so it seemed to me, whatever might have been said to the contrary. Later on, however, when one had opportunity to see her more frequently, and especially to talk with her, her personality grew upon one with an especial charm that has never been equalled by any other woman. She was not brilliant; she held strong opinions; she was very much impressed by her position, though, it must be owned, not in the least dazzled by her extraordinary success; she was impulsive; she was not overwhelmingly tactful; had much knowledge of the world, but little knowledge of mankind; she wounded sometimes when she had no intention of doing so; she was romantic, though unsentimental; there were the strangest contradictions in her nature, the strangest mixtures of good and bad; but with all her defects she completely subjugated those who got to know her, whatever might have been the first impression. Her glances had something of Spanish softness blended with French coquetry. In a word, she was a most attractive woman—one of the

EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

most attractive that has ever lived—but she certainly was not an ideal Sovereign.

When Eugénie married she was already twenty-seven, and therefore it was not easy for her to become used to the various duties and obligations of her new position. She was a thorough woman of the world, which rendered her especially charming when at Compiègne or at Fontainebleau, where etiquette was not so strict as at the Tuileries. At those moments she was positively bewitching, but when she thought it necessary to assume her Imperial manner she lost her womanly charm.

There have been many beautiful moments in Eugénie's life; such, for instance, as her famous visit to Amiens at the time the cholera was raging there, and when, with a truly royal indifference, she exposed herself to very real and serious danger. She was charitable, and preferred not to boast of her charities; but, not possessing the Emperor's disposition, she resented injuries done to her. She was impetuous in all that she did, thought, or felt; certainly bigoted and superstitious, as Spaniards generally are. She was not courageous, though brave, because these are two very different things. She would not have minded being murdered in state, and the memory of the deed being handed down to posterity; but she could not find the resolution to face an intricate situation, nor to remain silent and firm at a difficult moment. Her nature was essentially restless; she could never wait with patience for what the future might hold. Her attitude on the 4th of September was characteristic, and it was in accordance with her nature that she tried to explain the abandonment of her position as Regent by the word "necessity," when, in reality, it was the shrinking of a lonely woman, with no one near her to tell her what she ought to do, or to show her how to resist the demands of the mob.

But once more I must say she exercised a wonderful fascination on all those whom she entertained. There was something remarkable in the influence she exercised. In her presence one forgot all save her extraordinary charm.

In her private life Eugénie de Montijo, in spite of all that has been said and written on that subject, has always been irreproachable. Amid all the gaieties of the Court over which she presided she remained pure and chaste, and redeemed the many frailties of her outward demeanour by the dignity and blamelessness of her existence as a wife and mother. She bitterly resented the indiscretions of the Emperor, but she kept herself aloof from everything that could have been construed as a desire on her part to retaliate. Perhaps her temperament helped her; but it is certain that as a wife she was blameless, and that she showed herself an enlightened mother, trying to bring up her son above the flatteries that usually surround children born in such a high position, teaching him to obey, to be grateful to those who took care of him, and loving him quite as well and more wisely than the Emperor, who was perhaps too indulgent in matters which concerned his only son. That the Prince Imperial remained an only child was a source of deep grief to Napoleon III.

When first I saw Eugénie, her whole appearance was fairy-like; in spite of her forty years, she eclipsed all other women. Her slight, graceful figure was almost girlish in its suppleness, and she is the only woman I have ever seen who, though in middle life, did not prompt one to utter the usual remark when lovely members of the fair sex have attained her age: "How beautiful she must have been when she was young!"

## CHAPTER II

### The Surroundings and Friends of the Sovereigns

When Napoleon III. married, he tried to establish his Court on the same footing as that of his uncle after the latter's union with Marie Louise, and fearing that, in spite of his affection, his young wife would find it hard to get used to her exalted position, he surrounded her with the trammels of a severe etiquette. From this, however, she gradually emancipated herself, especially during the time when she acted as Regent for the Emperor, at the period of the war of 1859 with Austria.

This emancipation was in itself a curious phase. In her way Eugénie was just as anxious as the Emperor to order her household upon the same lines as those of the other great Courts of Europe. Especially with that of Windsor she had been deeply impressed, when with the Emperor she visited Queen Victoria. But she was not endowed by nature with that reserved dignity which is a necessity to regal rank, and the result stultified her efforts. The Empress, when a girl, had enjoyed far more liberty than girls had at the time of which I am writing. This lack of control led her sometimes to forget her rank as Empress, and she found herself drifting into her old habits of saying everything that occurred to her, or of allowing her sympathies and her antipathies to be seen by a public always eager and ready to criticise.

She had but few friends, and after the death of her sister, the Duchesse d'Albe, she felt very isolated, and in need of

one into whose ear she might confide her sorrows and her joys. She did not get on with the members of the Imperial Family, and she had been very much hurt at the attitude taken up in regard to her by the Princess Clotilde. Eugénie had received the Princess with open arms, but had met with repulse from the very first moment Clotilde arrived in France. Then, again, Eugénie's relations with Prince Napoleon became of the worst, perhaps owing to the fact that there had been a day, before her marriage with the Emperor, when those relations were very near. The antagonism towards her which the only cousin of her husband chose to adopt, wounded her to the quick, and instead of trying to overcome it with tact and apparent indifference, she did her best to accentuate his animosity, until open warfare resulted, and the strained situation became a general topic of gossip.

With Princess Mathilde, the sister of the Prince, the Empress was, also, not on intimate terms, although apparently they bore one another affection. The Princess was perhaps the most remarkable among the many fascinating women with whom the Second Empire will remain associated. Surpassingly beautiful in her youth, she retained her good looks, and notwithstanding her *embonpoint*, possessed a personality of great dignity. She was certainly a *grande dame*, despite her numerous frailties.

She was clever, kind, brilliant in more senses than one ; very talented, she liked to surround herself with clever people, who, in their turn, were glad to have her appreciation. There had been a time when the question of a marriage between her and her cousin, Prince Louis Napoleon, had been discussed, but the latter's chances were so uncertain, that neither Mathilde nor her father had had the courage to run the risk of uniting her destiny with that of the Pretender.

The Princess married M. Demidoff, and very soon regretted

it; so deeply that she tried to break the bonds. Thanks to the intervention of the Emperor Nicholas of Russia, a separation was arranged under very favourable terms for Madame Demidoff, who, by permission of the government of Louis Philippe, settled in Paris. She did not mix with politics, and only tried to create for herself a pleasant circle of acquaintances and friends. Unfortunately, she possessed in addition to a superior and cultivated mind, a very ardent temperament, and gossip soon became busy with her name, especially after her liaison with Count de Nieuwekerke became a recognised fact.

When the Revolution of 1848 brought back to France the heir to the Bonaparte traditions, the Princess Mathilde at once hastened to his side, and showed herself to be the best of friends. It was the Princess Mathilde who presided at his first entertainment at Compiègne, as well as at the Elysée, where he was residing when in the capital, and it was at her house that the Prince President, as he was called, met for the first time the lovely Spaniard who was later to become his wife.

The Princess Mathilde did not like the marriage, in view of the fact that she might have occupied the place which this stranger took, as it were by storm; she would hardly have been human had she done so. But she was far too clever to show her disapproval, and it is related that when the question arose as to who should carry the train of the new Empress, Mathilde at once declared that she would do so if the Emperor asked her, much to the astonishment and perhaps to the scandal of those who heard her. She bore no malice, and thought herself far too great a lady to imagine that by whatever she might do she would fall in the estimation of others, or that it would be derogatory to her position.

But though she consented to receive the future wife of

her cousin when first she entered the Tuileries, and though she tried hard to establish friendly relations with her, all her efforts failed, partly because the young Empress felt afraid of the brilliant Princess, and of her sharp tongue and brusque manners, partly, also, because Mathilde did not care for the people who formed the entourage of the Sovereign, and never felt at her ease at the many entertainments given by Eugénie. She thought them either too dull or too boisterous.

Mathilde was never so happy as when in her own house in the Rue de Courcelles, where all that was distinguished in France considered it an honour to be admitted, and where she could live the life of a private lady of high rank. She was too frank to conceal what she felt, and too honest to flatter the Empress, or to find charming what she considered to be the reverse. Though she disapproved of many things that her brother, Prince Napoleon, did, she did not care to blame him publicly, and thus she maintained a neutral attitude in regard to both. Eugénie's airy disposition and love of amusement in any shape or form prevented her from finding pleasure in the company of the Princess Mathilde, whom she thought exceedingly dull, and whom she accused of fomenting the accusations which her enemies showered upon her. So long as the Empire lasted there was no sympathy between the Empress and her husband's cousin, and it was only later, when both ladies had realised the emptiness of worldly things, that their relations became intimate and affectionate, so much so that when Mathilde Bonaparte died, it was Eugénie who watched beside her, and whose hands were the last she pressed before expiring.

The best friend that the Empress Eugénie had among the members of the Imperial Family was the Princess Anna Murat, who married the Duke of Mouchy, to the horror of all the Noailles family, and the chagrin of the Faubourg St.

Germain generally. Princess Anna was one of the loveliest women of her time, though perhaps not one of the brightest. Still, she had a warm heart, a kindly disposition, and a sincere attachment for the Empress. She had very nice dignified manners, if sometimes stiff, and was perhaps the only really *grande dame*, with the exception of the Princess Mathilde, among the many ladies with whom Eugénie liked to surround herself.

Very much might be said about the ladies of the Court. There were lovely women, such as the Countess Valovska, née Anna Ricci, the dark Florentine, whose smiles won her so many hearts, including that of Napoleon III.; others were clever like Pauline Metternich, and some were both lovely and clever, Mélanie Pourtalès for instance, that star of the Empire who condescended later to shine in the Republican firmament, and who to this day is one of the celebrities of Paris, in spite of her seventy odd years. There was the Duchesse de Persigny, and the Duchesse de Cadore, and the Baroness de Rothschild, and many others, but among them all the Empress could not boast of a real friend, always with the exception of the Duchesse de Mouchy, who owed her far too much ever to dare criticise anything she did.

I have mentioned the Princess Metternich. Among all those to whose fatal influence the Second Empire owed its fall she holds one of the first and foremost places. She it was who sapped its foundations and lowered its dignity; she it was who with a rude hand pulled back the veil which, until she appeared at Compiègne and at the Tuileries, had still been drawn between the general public and the Imperial Court. Young and ugly, but clever and gifted with what the French call *brio*, she lived but for one thing, and that was amusement in any shape or form. She had no respect for the society in which she found herself, and brought to Paris

an atmosphere of carelessness such as we sometimes display when we find ourselves travelling in a country where we are unknown, and where we can do what we like without fear of the *qu'en dira-t-on*, or, as they say in England, "Mrs. Grundy." After some experience of the strict etiquette of the Austrian Hofburg, she felt delighted to be able to dispense with it, and treated the Empress with disdain, making use of her in order to attain her own ends, and ruling the Tuileries like some of the present great ladies in pecuniary straits rule the houses of the American or South African millionaires whom—for a consideration—they introduce into society. The behaviour of the Princess Metternich can be characterised by her remark to a lady who, at Compiègne, reproved her for trying to induce the Empress to appear in public in a short gown, a thing that was not considered to be proper at the time of which I am writing. The friend asked her at the same time whether she would have advised the Empress Elizabeth to do such a thing; she replied vehemently: "No, certainly not, I would not do such a thing, but then my Empress is a real one."

Pauline Metternich never liked Eugénie; she secretly envied her for her beauty. She encouraged her in every false or mistaken step the Empress unwittingly took. She brought a shade of vulgarity into all the entertainments over which she presided and which she organised. She smoked big cigars without minding in the least whether it pleased the Empress or not, and she allowed herself every kind of liberty, sure of immunity, and careless as to what people thought about her. She showed herself the most ungrateful of beings, forsaking her friend when the latter was precipitated into obscurity and misfortune, never once giving her a thought. Pauline Metternich was a perfect type of an opportunist without a memory, and after having danced, eaten, smoked, enjoyed

herself at the Tuileries where she always was a favoured guest, she never once sent a message of sympathy to the discarded Sovereign, whose acquaintance she probably thought irksome and inconvenient. Once in a moment of expansion, so the story goes, she gave way to a remark which deserves to pass to posterity concerning those years during which she was the leading spirit at all the entertainments given at the Tuileries, and which I cannot help reproducing here: A diplomat who had known her in Paris asked her whether she did not regret the Second Empire, and received a characteristic reply: "Regret it? Why? It was very amusing, very vulgar, and it could not last; we all knew it, and we all made hay whilst the sun shone."

Countess Mélanie Pourtalès, in that respect, was far superior to Princess Metternich; she at least had the decency to remain faithful to her former sympathies and to her Bonapartist leanings. To this day she sees the Empress when the latter visits Paris, and she never indulges in one word of blame concerning that far away time when she also was one of the queens of the Tuileries.

Mélanie de Bussières is one of the marvels of last century. As beautiful as a dream, she had an angelic face, lovely innocent eyes, which used to look at the world with the guilelessness of a child, and a Madonna-like expression that reminded one of a long white lily drooping on its stem. She was intelligent, too, had an enormous amount of tact, and succeeded, whilst denying herself none of her caprices, in keeping unimpaired her place in Parisian society, of retaining as her friends all those to whom the world had given another name, and of acquiring a position such as few women have ever had before her. Always kind, rarely malicious, smiling alike on friends and foes, she contrived to disarm the latter, and never to estrange the former. Though very much envied, yet she was

liked, and she inspired with enthusiasm all those with whom she was brought into contact. Now she is a great-grandmother, but still a leading light of social Paris, and those who formerly admired her beauty continue to crowd around her in order to listen to her conversation.

When I entered the circle of Imperialist society, I was struck by the number of pretty women that I met there. They were not all clever; a good many were vulgar, but most of them were lovely. A ball at that time was a pretty sight, far prettier than it is at the present day, and as for amusement, one could find it wherever one went. Morals, on the other hand, were no worse than is the case at present; indeed, in many respects they were better, insomuch that it was far more difficult then, owing to the conditions of existence, for a lady belonging to the upper classes to misbehave herself than is the case at present, when women go freely everywhere, whilst during the Second Empire it was hardly possible for a well-known lady to be seen in a cab or a 'bus, or even walking in unfrequented streets. "Le diable n'y perdait rien," to use an old French expression; but a certain decorum, totally absent nowadays, had to be adhered to, and the Empress was very severe upon all those who infringed its rules. She had attacks of prudery, as it were, during which she posed as a watcher over the morals of her Court. Such a procedure among the very carefully immoral persons who surrounded her made many people smile.

The Emperor also had but few personal friends. The most faithful and devoted perhaps was Dr. Conneau, who had watched over Queen Hortense during her last illness, and who had given to her son the most sincere proofs of affection that one man can give to another. Conneau was that *rara avis*, a totally disinterested person. Millions had passed through his hands, but he died poor, and when the Empire fell he was

reduced to selling a collection of rare books he possessed, in order to have bread in his old age. He loved Napoleon with his whole heart, soul, and mind, and belonged to the very few who cared for and believed in the traditions of the Bonapartes. He did infinite good during the eighteen years the Empire lasted, and never refused to lay a case of distress before Napoleon III. once it was brought to his notice. Everybody respected him, and he was a general favourite with everyone, except perhaps with the Empress, who felt no personal sympathy for him.

Conneau had voluntarily asked to be allowed to share the Emperor's captivity at Ham, and it was thanks to him that the latter contrived to escape from that fortress disguised as a workman, with a plank on his shoulder, behind which he hid his face. Whilst Napoleon was hastening towards the Belgian frontier, Conneau did his best to hide his flight from the authorities, declaring to those who wanted to see him that he was ill and asleep in his bed. Conneau had cunningly arranged the pillows in such a way that they appeared to represent a body wrapped up in blankets. He knew very well that in doing this he was running a great risk, but nothing stopped him, and it is certain that to his bold initiative Napoleon III. owed first his escape and afterwards his Imperial Crown.

Conneau never left the Emperor, who breathed his last in that faithful servant's arms, murmuring before doing so: "Conneau, were you at Sedan?" thus showing how incurable had been the wound received on that fatal day which saw the fall of his throne and of his dynasty.

Conneau, with perhaps the exception of M. Mocquard, Napoleon's private secretary, was the person who knew the best of the Emperor's character, and he remained faithful to him to the last. One day a friend asked him whether he

was sorry not to have died before the fall of the Empire, and to have witnessed the terrible catastrophes that accompanied it. Conneau immediately replied: "I am sorry for myself, but glad for the Emperor, who would have had one friend less around him in his misfortune." The remark is characteristic of the man.

Mocquard also belonged to the few friends of Napoleon III. who had known his mother Queen Hortense, and who had devoted his life to the cause of the Bonapartes. He was one of the pleasantest men of his day, always on the alert to learn or to hear everything that could be useful to his Imperial master. Gifted with singular tact, he was able with advantage to come out of the most entangled and awkward situations. His reply to Berryer, who had written to him telling him that his political convictions prevented him from asking to be presented to the Emperor on his election to the French Academy, is well known, and proves his ability in that respect. The great advocate, in writing to Mocquard, had appealed to him as a former colleague. Napoleon's private secretary at once responded to his request, and gave him the most courteous and most respectful reproof, in which the dignity of his Sovereign and that of the great advocate were equally taken into account.

"The Emperor," wrote Mocquard, "regrets that M. Berryer has allowed his political leanings to get the upper hand of his duties as Academician. M. Berryer's presence at the Tuileries would not have embarrassed His Majesty, as he seems to dread. From the height on which he finds himself raised, the Emperor would only have seen in the new Academician an orator and a writer; in to-day's adversary, the defender of yesterday. M. Berryer is perfectly free to obey the general practice imposed by the Academy, or to follow his personal repugnances."

A friend of Berryer, who happened to be with him when that letter reached him, related to me later that that famous ornament of the French Bar for once in his life felt embarrassed, and acknowledged his regret at thus having drawn upon himself a well deserved and tactfully administered rebuff.

When Mocquard died his place was taken by M. Conti, also a clever man, who was in possession of the post at the time I arrived in Paris. He did not succeed in gaining the confidence of the Emperor, as his predecessor had done, and I believe never felt quite at ease in his difficult position. I do not know what became of him after the fall of the Empire.

General Fleury was already Ambassador in St. Petersburg at the time of which I am speaking. He had been, and still was, one of the most intimate friends of the Emperor, but he was not liked by the Empress, whose influence he had always tried to thwart. Eugénie was delighted when he was sent on his foreign mission; she had never got used to the General: perhaps he knew too many things relating to that distant time when Mademoiselle de Montijo had never dreamt that fate held a crown in reserve for her. And then one of the Empress's closest acquaintances, the Comtesse de Beaulaincourt, the daughter of the Marshal de Castellane, and formerly Marquise de Contades, had an undying grudge against General Fleury. It must be owned that he had not behaved altogether well in regard to her, and she used her best endeavours to harm him in the mind of the impressionable Eugénie, to whom she represented the General as one of her worst enemies. This was not the case; but Fleury had no sympathy for the Empress, and certainly did nothing to further her views or her opinions in regard to politics, as she would have liked him to do. To him is credited the most severe comment that ever was made on the subject of the marriage between the Emperor and the lovely Spaniard who had captivated his fancy; that

comment was revealed to the world through the indiscretion of Madame de Contades, as she was at that time. Fleury had been asked why he objected so much to his future Sovereign: "I do not like her," he replied, "because I feel that she will insist upon wearing her crown in her bed and her night-cap in public." This bitter remark being repeated to the person whom it most concerned, was never forgiven by her.

Fleury, Persigny, and Morny had been the most trusted advisers of Napoleon III., but unfortunately I never had opportunity to meet any of them. With their removal from the political scene, the Empire lost its most solid supports. The ability of M. Rouher could not stave off the supreme calamity that was to cast it into the abyss; and as for M. Emile Ollivier, about whom I shall have more to say presently, he had neither the energy nor the moral courage to resist the current that went against him and that swept away a regime.

In general, when I look back upon those last two years of the Second Empire, and try to recapitulate all that I saw, I cannot find anyone, with the few exceptions already mentioned, who was really the friend of either the Emperor or the Empress. Surrounded by flatterers, admirers, courtiers, they had around them no really devoted people willing to risk anything in order to prove their affection. The Tuileries seemed to be one vast Liberty Hall, inhabited by men and women who knew very well that they had but a short time before them to enjoy the good things of this world, and whose only care was how they could escape with the most advantage from situations which all the time they felt to be shaking under their feet. Indeed, the Court reminded one of a vast *cuvée* out of which everybody tried to snatch some prize. It was a case of eating, drinking and being merry, but without thinking that for all these things there would one day be a reckoning.

## CHAPTER III

### Fontainebleau and Compiègne

Though still a young man when I was appointed to Paris —a man of thirty-two years is considered to be quite young— I had already a considerable experience of the world, and knew the society of most European capitals, having been at every European Court. I was very well able, therefore, to judge of what I saw, and to form a reliable opinion, good or bad, of the people with whom I came into contact.

I must confess at once that I arrived in France with certain prejudices against the regime, and I did not examine it at first with over-indulgent eyes. But as I grew to know the Emperor and the Empress well, many of these prejudices vanished. The kindness of the Emperor, and his boundless generosity, could not but impress favourably, and as for Eugénie, her powerful charm made one forget other sides of her character. When in their presence it was difficult to realise that they were Sovereigns, or to have the feeling, whether at the Tuileries, at Compiègne, or at Fontainebleau, that one was at a Royal Court. A mixture of formality and of gaiety without restraint was prevalent, which entirely upset one's notions of what should constitute the atmosphere of a Court. Eugénie was an incomparable hostess, even if sometimes eccentric; Napoleon was the most thoughtful of hosts, though restless at times, and showing some impatience at different vagaries indulged in by his guests; still, though each was addressed as "Your Majesty," it was in much

the same spirit that one would have said "Monsieur" or "Madame"; deference was lacking.

In spite of the shade of Bohemianism which presided over the annual gatherings at Compiègne and at Fontainebleau, the invitations were always coveted, and with reason, for a week spent at either place was certainly most enjoyable. The autumn season generally saw the Sovereigns at Compiègne, which the Empress liked very much, and there could be met all the celebrities of modern France and a good many foreigners, whom the Imperial couple liked to encourage to visit France, and on whom they lavished every attention. They were generally asked to stay a full week, and privileged persons were sometimes invited to extend their sojourn. Life was very pleasant in this old home of the Bourbon dynasty, and the liberty left to the guests to do what they liked added to its charm. One rode, one hunted, one drove, and one flirted to one's heart's content, and the only thing which was asked was punctuality at meals and admiration for the beauty of the Empress.

The exceeding charm and beauty of the Empress was never more seen to advantage than in one of her country homes, where she felt more at her ease than in Paris. She used to ask privileged persons among her guests to drink tea with her in the afternoon. On these occasions she appeared at her best, talking on every subject, and discussing all the new books. She rather prided herself on being what French people call "un bel esprit," and of caring for literature; she considered it a part of her duty ostensibly to interest herself in the literary and scientific movements of the day. She liked to make herself popular among writers and artists, of whom there was generally a good sprinkling at Compiègne. Among her favourites were Octave Feuillet, Mérimée, and Carpeaux. More than once Carpeaux implored her to allow him to carve

her bust, to which, however, she would not agree. Mérimée had been a friend of her mother's, the Countess de Montijo, and had known her as a little girl; indeed, people whispered softly that he had had a good deal to do with her elevation to the throne, having admirably advised her at that critical period of her existence when first she became the object of Napoleon's adoration.

Mérimée was a charming man in spite of his misanthropic tendencies and his fits of bad temper, which caused him sometimes to say the rudest things imaginable, but which in reality he did not mean at all. He was, however, a privileged person, being customarily forgiven words which would not have been tolerated in anyone else. He was, perhaps, amidst the crowd which congregated in the vast halls and galleries of Compiègne, the one who judged most clearly what was going on around him, and I remember that one evening, when we were discussing the political situation, he suddenly asked me: "Et vous croyez que cela durera?" ("And you think that all this will last?") Noticing my surprise, he did me the honour of a lengthy explanation: "You see, my friend, here in this beautiful France of ours we never look beyond the present day; we enjoy ourselves without any thought of what the morrow may bring. We have seen so many changes, so many revolutions, that we have entirely lost the feeling of stability, without which no nation can achieve really great things. In politics one must have either stability, faith in the principles which one is called upon to defend, or else enthusiasm like that felt by our troops at Marengo. Now can you imagine a spirit of enthusiasm for our master here?" And he winked in the direction of the Emperor's private apartments. "He is good, and kind, and weak, but though the nation and the army shout 'Vive l'Empereur' when they see him, it is very doubtful whether they would sacrifice anything

beyond the interests of their neighbours for him. And the Empress, she is as much to be pitied as she is to be envied. I am sorry to have to say so, because I am really attached to her, but what can one do! She does not realise that she is not by birth the equal of the other Queens of Europe, and there lies her great mistake. She is so beautiful that one would have worshipped at once Mademoiselle de Montijo, but the nation could not bring itself to respect the Comtesse de Téba in the same way as had she been a Princess born. Now, don't betray me, please," he added, "but I know that you are discreet, and, besides, who minds the sayings of that old grumbler Mérimée!"

This *boutade* left a deep impression on my mind at the time I heard it; it resounded like the "Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" of the Empire, uttered as it was by a man who was well known to have personally a great and sincere devotion for the fair Spaniard whom he had helped to place on the throne of France. Poor Mérimée was not destined to survive the fall of that Imperial regime of which he had been one of the strongest supporters. He died broken-hearted a few days after the disaster of Sedan, writing pathetically to one of his friends just before his end: "I have tried all my life to fight against prejudices, and to be a citizen of the world before being a Frenchman. But all these cloaks of philosophy are now of no avail to me. I bleed to-day of the same wounds as these idiots of Frenchmen, and I weep over their humiliation."

Octave Feuillet was a great favourite of the Empress. He was a charming man, but always ill and always preoccupied with nursing his health, and his *malade imaginaire*. His novels were undoubtedly pretty, and created a great sensation at the time. He was the fashionable novelist of his generation, and certainly some of his works deserve to pass to posterity

because of their fine observation. He was middle-class to the core, and this made him worship everything that seemed to be above him. He took himself far too much in earnest, and even carried so far his appreciation of his own merit that he wrote once or twice to the Emperor, proffering unsought his advice in political matters. Napoleon III. was far too kind to rebuff him, and sometimes even replied to him, flattering his vanity, as he was accustomed to flatter writers and journalists, in whom he saw the manufacturers of public opinion, and whom he liked to conciliate as far as possible. Octave Feuillet professed a great admiration for the Empress, and he must be given his due—he remained faithful to her after her fall. He was one of the few who went to Chislehurst to present their respects to the exiled and dethroned Sovereigns.

In violent contrast to his behaviour can be instanced that of the architect Viollet-le-Duc, who, after having been loaded with money and kindnesses by the Emperor and his Consort, turned his back upon them after the fall of the Empire, and even tried to make excuses for ever having known them. Unfortunately, he was but one of many, and bitter must have been the thoughts of Napoleon III. and Eugénie when they saw that all the good they had done, the boundless generosity they had exercised, had only made them a few more enemies among the ranks of those who owed them so much.

Carpeaux, in spite of his rudeness, was very much appreciated at Compiègne, and I often saw him there, as indeed I met also most of the illustrious Frenchmen the Empire could boast of at that time. These celebrities, and the number of pretty women who were also invited, made the gatherings unique. The members of the fair sex who were nearly always present were the Princess Metternich, the pretty Comtesse Mélanie de Pourtalès, the Marquise de Galiffet, then separated

from her husband, who had already struck up that strange friendship with the Princesse de Sagan, née Seillères, which gave rise to so much talk later on. Mme. de Galiffet was one of the loveliest women of the Imperial Court, and certainly the one who knew the best how to dress. She was an *élégante* before everything else, and I believe cared even more for her dresses than for her lovers. Her relations with General Galiffet were most strange. They used to meet sometimes in society, and he was always most polite towards her; it was even said that the warmest admirer the Marquise de Galiffet had ever had was her husband. This did not prevent them never agreeing upon any subject save one, and that, it was rumoured, reunited them sometimes, not under the same roof, but under the same tent, as the Marquise de Caux once said with more wit than kindness.

Another habitué of Compiègne was the Baronne de Poilly. She was a daring horsewoman, an eccentric character, full of brusquerie and kindness, but not liked, and very much talked about. She was, with the Comtesse de Beaulaincourt, ex-Marquise de Contades, one of the most dreaded persons in the whole of Paris society.

Speaking of Madame de Beaulaincourt reminds me of various episodes in that lady's career, which set me wondering how the strict Faubourg St. Germain, as well as the frivolous society of the Second Empire, could have taken her to their hearts in the way they did. She was bad for badness' sake, as unsparing in her words as in her judgments; always on the look out for something evil to do, or something unpleasant to say. Full of wit with it all, this last circumstance only made her the more dangerous. She was a rare example of a vicious woman who had no charitable instincts; it seemed as if she condemned others the more bitterly because she knew that there was needing much pardon in herself. Nevertheless, Madame de

Beaulaincourt was one of the most remarkable personalities at the Court of the Emperor Napoleon III., and as such she deserves to be remembered.

The members of the Cabinet and their wives were generally asked to Compiègne in turn. At Fontainebleau, where the Court used to spend the summer months, this was rarely the case. St. Cloud was too near Paris to be really pleasant as a summer residence. Fontainebleau was quite in the country, and its lovely forest afforded many opportunities for riding, driving, or hunting, which appealed to Eugénie's tastes. There she used to live a family life free from the restraints of the Court, with the guests whom she asked to share her *villégiature*. At Fontainebleau, too, the Emperor, always a great stickler for etiquette, allowed it to be relaxed, considering his stay there as a kind of holiday. He was more often in the company of his guests than at Compiègne, and his presence was very much appreciated. When he liked, Napoleon III. could be a charming man and an interesting talker, but it was not often that he allowed himself to become expansive.

Life at Fontainebleau as well as at Compiègne was almost uniform in its round of gaieties. The company assembled for breakfast at noon, after which the guests followed their own inclinations during the afternoon. A few privileged ones, however, were asked to drive or walk with the Empress, and afterwards to have tea with her. All guests enjoyed perfect liberty, but this did not prevent them from watching their neighbours to find out their little weaknesses, for gossip was rife both at Compiègne and at Fontainebleau, and many unpleasant rumours concerning the Emperor and the Empress were started there. The manners and customs that prevailed among the recipients of the Imperial hospitality were publicly criticised, the feeling being that it would certainly have been better had more discrimination been exercised. There was

little dignity though much ceremony during these " series," as they used to be called, and the extreme liberty granted was the source of all kinds of unmerited rumours concerning what happened in those vast halls. Somehow it savoured of desecration to see the gay company of careless men and fashionable women who thronged Fontainebleau without giving a thought to the great events which its walls had witnessed.

One evening at Fontainebleau, after the rest of the world had retired, I was returning late to my bedroom from an enjoyable stroll in the lovely park. There was a beautiful moon, and it lit up the old castle of François I., with its many turrets, its old gables, its whole aspect speaking of the grandeur of many ages. I thought myself the only one to indulge in such an eccentricity, when suddenly I came face to face with the Chevalier Nigra, then one of the great admirers of the Empress, and a general favourite both at Court and in Society. Chevalier Nigra had been the private secretary of Count de Cavour, and was considered one of the stars of Italian diplomacy. He professed the greatest devotion for Eugénie, knew exactly how to flatter her and thus to glean information as to what was going on in the French Cabinet. More clever than lovely Madame de Castiglione, who thought that one of her glances was sufficient to keep the Emperor enchained to her chariot, Nigra did not attempt to play the lover, but rather the worshipper of the Empress, whom he used to tell he had set upon a shrine whence he hoped she would condescend from time to time to smile upon him. He had all the subtlety of the Italian, and had read, and, what is better, thoroughly digested and understood, the philosophy expressed by Machiavelli in his works. He was an ardent patriot, and when he accepted the appointment to Paris it was with the firm intention of using his best endeavours to bring about the completion and recognition of Italian unity.

Nigra was an extremely pleasant man, with a sufficient tincture of cynicism to make him amiable without being aggressive. He rarely spoke the truth, and never said what he thought; but he had the talent of convincing people of his entire sincerity. A keen observer, he had judged better than any of his colleagues the frailty of the Imperial regime, and was only watching for the moment when the house of cards should collapse. On the evening I am referring to he was smoking a big cigar and walking slowly in the flower-garden which stretched in front of the private apartments of the palace, enjoying the scent of the roses, and from time to time raising his eyes towards the only row of windows still showing a light amidst the darkness that enveloped the venerable pile.

When he saw me, he pointed upwards with his finger to these windows, saying at the same time:

"She is not sleeping; she is always the last one to go to rest."

"I wonder what she is doing so late," I replied.

"Thinking about her dresses, or the last sermon she has listened to," was the remark of Nigra. "How little the Empress understands her situation."

"She gathers her roses whilst she can," was my reply.

"Yes," retorted the Italian diplomatist, "and perhaps she does the best thing under the circumstances; all this cannot last."

"You do not believe in the durability of the Empire?" I asked him.

"No," was the reply. "I do not believe in it at all. The Italian question will overthrow it sooner than one thinks."

"You do not admit the possibility of a war between Italy and France on the subject of the integrity of the Holy See?" I inquired.

"Certainly I don't," said Nigra, "but I know one thing; the Emperor has no likelihood of keeping his crown, or of passing it to his son, unless he makes up his mind to fulfil the promises which he gave, perhaps in an unguarded moment, and without thinking of the consequences, but which he gave all the same. This hesitation of his has not only entirely destroyed his popularity in Italy, but it has also thrown Italian politicians into the arms of his foes. You see, we cannot prevent the natural course of events taking place; the supremacy of the Pope has had its day, and the Bourbons also have achieved their destiny. Italy, if she is to be regenerated, can only be so under the sway of an Italian dynasty. The Bourbons are not Italians; they are French, with a large admixture of Austrian blood, and their temperament is distinctly hostile to that of the Italian people. The House of Savoy, on the other hand, has everything that appeals to the mind and to the imagination of my country; it will welcome Victor Emmanuel with joy wherever he may appear. You must not forget, either, a thing of which people generally lose sight: Italians are superstitious; they are not at all religious, and they more or less look upon the Pope in the same light as they do the small princes and dukes who have ruled them for so long. Temporal Power has far more prestige abroad than is the case with us, and Italians will only feel wrathful against those who may try to force it upon them. The people of Italy instinctively guess that the Emperor is afraid to go against the popular feeling in France, and that he will at a given moment refuse to help their ambitions if he finds that they clash with his own personal interests. That is where he makes his mistake," continued Nigra, who had become excited, a rare thing with him; "that is where he makes his mistake. If he upheld our national ambitions he would find us at his side when his hour of peril will strike,

whereas now we shall merely look on and do what he did in 1859—seek our own advantage, heedless of the danger in which he may find himself placed."

I looked at him attentively.

"So you believe that this hour of danger is fast approaching?" I asked.

"Of course it is," was the reply; "its warning rang long ago, after Sadowa, and when the bullets of Juarez struck the breast of Maximilian at Queretaro. It is only blind people, blinded by vanity, like those who are in power here, who do not see the menace that the armaments of Prussia constitute for the whole of Europe."

"You do not believe in the readiness of the French army in case of a war?" I asked.

"Do you?" retorted Nigra.

I remained silent.

"No, I do not believe in it," he went on slowly, "the army is not capable of strong resistance to a well disciplined foe. How can an army be so in a country where politics are paramount? You see there is no real patriotism in France, there is only chauvinism, and that is not quite the same thing. The Frenchman will not admit that he can be conquered by anyone. Why, we have seen it at Solferino, where our troops fought desperately, and were not even thanked by the Emperor, whose soldiers could never have held out alone against the shock of the Austrian regiments. When we came up and decided the fate of the battle they were already giving way. You must not forget one thing, the French soldier gets discouraged at his first reverse, and most certainly the fate of the next campaign will be decided in its very first days.

"The Emperor also is no longer what he once was," went on Nigra; "he is ill, broken down, either by disease or by worry, he has lost very much of his former elasticity, and

is more than ever undecided in the resolutions he is called upon to make. The Empress, on the other hand, believes herself to possess political ability, and is encouraged therein by people who see a source of advantage for them in a Regency over which she would be called upon to preside. The death of the Emperor, which ten years ago would have been regarded in the light of a calamity, not only for France but for Europe, is no longer dreaded, because the feeling is that he has survived himself, that his lucky star has left him. The convinced Bonapartists think that a Liberal Empire is an anachronism; but the Emperor, who was always more or less a conspirator, dreams, on the contrary, of establishing his dynasty on new lines, in which his strong sympathies towards Liberalism will take the upper hand. When once his entourage realise this fact, which so far they do not yet suspect, they will do their best to bring matters to a crisis, and by means of a foreign war divert Napoleon's mind from his present intentions. And that war——"

He stopped and looked at me significantly.

"That war won't find Italy the ally of France," I remarked.

"Certainly not, because there would be no necessity for it. Why should we lose either men or money when nothing could be gained by it? What we want is Rome, and Rome we shall get all the same, whether Napoleon allows it or not. One cannot stop the evolution of history."

"But she—what will she do?" I asked, pointing up to the windows we had been looking at a few moments before, when, as if in reply to my question, the light suddenly went out.

Nigra shrugged his shoulders, as if this matter did not concern him at all.

"She will never resign herself to her fall, should such a thing occur," I remarked.

"Oh yes, she will do so," was the answer. "She will not even attempt to fight against her fate should it prove inimical to her," he concluded philosophically.

It was during the last time the Imperial Court was at Fontainebleau that this remarkable conversation took place, and it impressed me so much that I noted it down at once when I reached my room. I was to think about it more than once subsequently, and many years later, meeting Count Nigra, as he had become then, in St. Petersburg, where he had been appointed Italian Ambassador, I reminded him of it, and asked him to tell me what had really been the conduct of the Empress Eugénie on that fateful 4th of September when he and Prince Metternich urged her to fly before the revolutionaries.

"She did exactly what I told you that night at Fontainebleau," replied Nigra; "she declared that she would not go against the wishes of the country, and that, since it wanted her to leave Paris, she would do so. Mind, she knew nothing as to whether this was true or not; no one had told her that the country wanted her to go, one had simply drawn her attention to the fact that her life was in danger, and she believed it at once. Metternich at one moment asked her whether she would not take a few things with her, but she replied that it was not necessary, and she left the Tuileries without even taking a pocket handkerchief."

## CHAPTER IV

### Political Men of the Time

I became very well acquainted with both M. Rouher and M. Emile Ollivier. The latter inspired me with warm feelings of friendship. He was essentially an honest man, and his mistakes were more the faults of others than his own. He never had the opportunity really to show of what stuff he was made. Though possessed of the best intentions in the world, he was always misunderstood and suspected, even by the very people who should have had confidence in him and in his sense of justice and impartiality.

When he was called upon to form a Cabinet he was met by the antagonism of the Empress, who did not approve of the new trend in politics, which had replaced the one inaugurated at the *coup d'état*. She hated the idea of the slightest diminution in the Imperial power and prestige. She did not believe in the necessity of concessions to public opinion, and she was deeply incensed to find that her ideas on the subject were not shared by her husband, who was more or less under the influence of his new Prime Minister. Eugénie, who was superstitious, declared to her friends that she had the feeling when she spoke with Emile Ollivier that he was going to be fatal to her.

The fact is that fate went against the new Prime Minister. M. Ollivier had hardly been in power when occurred an event almost forgotten to-day, but which was to sound the first

knell of the Empire. Prince Pierre Bonaparte shot Victor Noir.

Till that fatal day very few people knew anything about Prince Pierre. He was a distant cousin of the Emperor, with whom his relations had never been either affectionate or even friendly. He was the black sheep of a family which at that time could ill afford a setback, and his political opinions, coupled with an irregular connection with a person belonging to an inferior class, and whom he was ultimately to make his wife, had led to his disgrace by the head of his house. Napoleon III. ignored the existence of this inconvenient kinsman, who lived in a little house at Auteuil.

Prince Pierre was a true Corsican in character: violent, and given to strong fits of passion. He professed, together with most Radical political opinions and strong Republican sympathies, an immense worship for the memory of his great ancestor, the first Napoleon, and a great respect for the family traditions of the Bonapartes. And when one day, in a small newspaper edited at Bastia, he chanced across a very vile attack on the family, he got into a rage, and replied to it in the same paper by an equally virulent attack directed against the author.

The matter did not end there, for very soon the Parisian press took part, and the occasion was used by the enemies of the Imperial regime in order to air their grievances against it. At last one of the editors of an opposition paper called *La Revanche*, M. Paschal Grousset, who later on was to acquire a sorry celebrity during the excesses of the Commune, sent two of his friends to Prince Pierre, to request him either to apologise in person or else to fight.

What happened during the interview no one will ever know. The versions given by the Prince and that of M. Ulric de Fonville, who together with Victor Noir had called

at Auteuil at the request of Paschal Grousset, differ entirely as to what passed. The result, however, was the murder of Noir by the cousin of Napoleon III.

This event, occurring as it did at a moment when the Empire was being attacked on all sides and already tottering, added considerably to the difficulties under which the Emperor was labouring. Unfortunately, neither he nor his responsible advisers calculated its consequences. Instead of following the advice given by M. Rouher, who was of opinion that Prince Pierre should have been imprisoned in a fortress until his crime had been forgotten by the public, Napoleon III. decided to have his cousin tried by a special court which assembled at Tours. The court acquitted the accused, which only added to the general exasperation against the government. M. Ollivier was reproached with having lent himself to a travesty of justice, in order to shield a relative of the Sovereign from a justly deserved punishment, and was accused by his former friends and followers of allowing himself to fall under the influence of the Court.

This was gall and wormwood to that sincere politician, and the bitterness which resulted on both sides made the head of the Cabinet lose that calmness which, more than anyone else, he required in the difficult task that lay before him.

As to Prince Pierre, the cause of all this perturbation, he left France after his acquittal, settled in Brussels, and after the fall of the Empire married the mother of his children, and spent his life in comparative poverty until the marriage of his son Roland Bonaparte with the youngest daughter of the celebrated Blanc, of Monaco fame, which brought back financial prosperity to that branch of the family. He did not enjoy it long, because he died a few months later, and was followed very quickly to the grave by his young

daughter-in-law. His widow, the washerwoman whose introduction into his family Napoleon III. had deeply resented, went on living with her son Roland, devoting herself to him and to his baby daughter. She never could learn what manners were, but she was kind-hearted in spite of her vulgarity, and did good in every way she could. Prince Roland, on his side, had the tact never to be ashamed of the humble origin of his mother, to surround her always with the greatest respect, and to treat her with the most tender affection. She did the honours of his house as well as she could, and unfortunately for her, died before the marriage of her granddaughter, the Princess Marie Bonaparte, with Prince George of Greece, an event which, had she only lived long enough to witness it, would have proved the supreme happiness of her life.

This digression has led me far away from M. Emile Ollivier. I had the opportunity to see him on the day following the acquittal of Prince Pierre Bonaparte, and was surprised to find him considerably irritated against M. Rouher, whom he accused of trying to influence the Emperor in a direction contrary to the resolutions which the Sovereign had taken in conjunction with Ollivier himself. He seemed as if he wanted to find someone on whom he might vent his anger at his own mistakes. A phrase which he uttered on that day, but to which I did not pay any attention at the moment, struck me later on as the expression of a desire to regain a popularity he had lost:

"Il nous faut maintenant à tout prix regagner notre popularité" ("We must now at all costs win back our popularity").

It was immediately after these troubled days that the important question of the Plebiscite was raised. It was violently opposed by M. Thiers and his followers, and also by several of the Emperor's personal friends, who dreaded

what it might mean to him. Even when its result ratified the country's confidence in the Empire and in the Emperor, they were not inspired with any greater confidence in the future. I remember that at a dinner which took place at the house of Marshal Canrobert and at which I was present, M. Rouher, who was among the guests, remarked sadly that there was nothing to be so very proud of in the results of the Plebiscite, because Paris had proved by its vote that it was distinctly hostile to the Government. "Et c'est Paris qui fait les révolutions et renverse les gouvernements" ("And it is Paris which makes revolutions and upsets governments"), he concluded with a sigh.

Without being on intimate terms with him, I liked M. Rouher exceedingly. For one thing, he was really the Emperor's friend, and for another, when all is said and done, he was a statesman. It is not to be denied that he was ambitious and liked power for power's sake. He did not care so much for the welfare of France as he did for that of the Bonaparte dynasty, but he had a clear apprehension of all the political necessities of the moment, and saw farther than those who were listened to with greater attention than himself. He did not perhaps like the Empress very much, but he remained faithful to her, and out of respect for the place which she occupied and the crown which she wore, always tried to uphold her prestige. He loved Napoleon III. truly and sincerely, and always gave him disinterested advice. Like all strong men he had enemies, and like all sincere people he was accused of dissimulation and intrigue by those who did not understand that to tell the truth is sometimes the best way not to be believed.

He has been accused of having gathered immense riches whilst he was in power. I can testify that this has not been the case by far, and that when the "Second Emperor," as

he was sometimes called, died, he was comparatively a poor man.

Socially, M. Rouher was charming, and his conversation was most enjoyable. He had what French people call "le mot pour rire," as well as a marvellous skill for parrying questions addressed to him, and replying without answering anything. He had dignity, and gave constant proofs of it in his presidency of the Senate, where he displayed the rarest qualities of tact and skill.

Talking of tact, leads me to say a few words respecting a personage who, to his own misfortune, as well as to that of other people, did not know the significance of that word. It is of Prince Napoleon, Prince Plon Plon, as the Prussians called him, that I am thinking.

This first cousin of the Emperor was certainly a remarkable personage, and undoubtedly a most clever man. But evidently, also, a bad fairy had presided at his birth, and blighted with her magic wand all the great qualities with which nature had endowed him. His was essentially a restless nature, incapable of contentment, even when it had what it wanted. Had he been Emperor he would have lived in opposition to himself, *faute de mieux*. Of ambition he had a lot; of desires and passions even more, but he lacked an evenly balanced mind, and that most essential of all qualities, submission before accomplished facts and the things that human will cannot change. His intelligence was sharp, bright, and clear; he was capable of resolution, and had initiative in his character. He was gifted with rare eloquence, and, possessing also an easy pen, wrote pages that great writers would have felt proud to sign. He was brilliant, too, in conversation, and to all these talents he added qualities that, joined with the prestige of his name, and of his position, might have called him to great destinies, could he but have learned how to

use them. His existence was essentially one aptly described by the French expression "une vie manquée," and he was his own worst enemy. Always in opposition to his cousin he succeeded in rousing in revolt against himself not only the advisers of the Crown, but also the Emperor, and especially the Empress. Eugénie, with whom he had been ardently in love when she was still Mademoiselle de Montijo, was the object of his especial animosity later on, and he never lost an opportunity of displaying it, forgetting even that she was a lady, and that he should have shown himself a gentleman in his behaviour towards her. Among the survivors of the time none will have forgotten the scandal he caused at Compiègne when he refused to propose the health of the Empress on the day of St. Eugénie, when the Emperor asked him to do so. On that occasion as on many others, he quite lost sight of the politeness which a Sovereign and a woman has the right to expect, even from her worst enemies.

Prince Napoleon was all his life in opposition to somebody or something, and by poetic justice before his death he was to experience the sorrow of finding his own son oppose him and his principles. Deception dogged his footsteps, disappointment seemed to pursue him, for which he himself was partly responsible, and partly the victim of circumstances. He is more to be pitied than anything else. His life seemed to be spent in seeing withdrawn from his lips the cup that a wicked fairy kept presenting to him in order to tempt him with its contents.

A good many of Prince Napoleon's defects proceeded from a spirit of bravado, such as that which distinguished the Italian condottieri of old. He took a vicious pleasure in appearing to be what in reality he was not, and in defying public opinion, as in the case of his famous Good Friday

dinners, when he asked his best friends to help him to eat ham and roast beef on an occasion when the gayest of gay Parisians would not have dreamt of touching anything else but fish. His unorthodoxy was more affected than sincere, more frequently it was adopted because it amused him to shock people.

His wife, the virtuous Princess Clotilde of Savoy, was a saint in her life and habits. She had absolutely no bond of sympathy with him, and made him always feel that duty alone kept her at his side. She had great, noble, and even grand qualities, but her disposition was neither amiable, nor sympathetic, and Prince Napoleon should have had a wife he could love, rather than one whom he could only respect.

When he died alone in Rome, within a stone's throw from the palace where his distinguished relative, Madame Mère, had ended her sad existence, and within sight of the chapel where rests the mortal remains of the Princess Borghese, née Pauline Bonaparte, he was on terms of intimate friendship with a lady well known in Paris society, the Marquise de ——, whose salon is to this day the rendezvous of a certain circle of people, among whom may be seen some enjoying a great social position, and about which I shall have something more to say later on. This lady was passionately attached to Prince Napoleon, for whom she had sacrificed a good deal. She had been a beautiful woman, gifted with a splendid voice, admired by many, and loved by not a few. Her devotion to the Prince was admirable, but her presence at his bedside robbed his last hours of dignity.

His widow, the Princess Clotilde, retired to the castle of Moncalieri, where she, too, died a few years ago, after having seen her eldest son, Prince Victor, married to the Princess Clementine of Belgium. Her youngest boy, Prince Louis

Napoleon, after serving for several years in the ranks of the Russian army, lives now in comparative solitude, at the castle of Prangins in Switzerland, having inherited the fortune of his aunt, the Princess Mathilde. As for Princess Clotilde's daughter, the Princess Letitia Bonaparte, she married, under rather singular circumstances, her uncle, the Duke of Aosta, the brother of King Humbert of Italy. When I use the words "singular circumstances," I am alluding to the popular belief that the Duke had no particular intention of marrying his niece. The Princess Letitia, however, had inherited the ardent temperament of her father, Prince Napoleon. The Duke died shortly after the marriage. At present the widowed Duchess of Aosta spends part of her time in Turin, and part in Paris, where she has an apartment in the Hotel de Castiglione, Rue de Rivoli, and enjoys herself as much as she possibly can, being a general favourite everywhere.

After the Plebiscite, it was generally felt that some changes in the Cabinet of M. Emile Ollivier had become imperative, especially as its principal members, M. Buffet and M. Daru, were not entirely in accord with M. Ollivier, being more or less under the influence of Thiers, who had been a resolute adversary of the Plebiscite. The portfolio of Foreign Affairs, becoming vacant owing to the retirement of Comte Napoleon Daru, was offered to the Duc de Gramont, who accepted.

The Duc de Gramont, among all the people who had rallied to the Empire, was the one whose adherence had caused the most pleasure at the Tuileries. He had been the favourite of the Duchess d'Angoulême, the daughter of Louis XVI. and of Marie Antoinette, and had inspired such a deep affection in that severe Princess, that she had left him a large fortune, from which he derived an income of about one million francs.

All his family traditions were connected with those of the House of Bourbon, and one would have thought that nothing could have made him swerve from his allegiance to the Comte de Chambord. When he forsook his former masters, and enlisted among the followers of the Napoleonic dynasty, there was great rejoicing at this unhoped-for and unexpected defection, and great bitterness at Frohsdorf. The Empress Eugénie lavished her best and most amiable smiles on the descendant of the famous Corisande, and very soon the Duke found himself the cherished guest at all the festivities that took place, either at Fontainebleau or at Compiègne, or the Tuileries.

He was made an ambassador at Vienna, no one knew why, presumably for no other reason than that it was necessary to make something out of him, and to shower honours and dignities on his head. He did not make himself liked in Austria, and the statesmen with whom he found himself thrown into contact did not form a high opinion of his diplomatic talents. He felt himself secretly despised, and being of an ambitious turn of mind, he wanted to do something very striking in order to make himself appreciated by others to the same degree as he appreciated himself.

It was with joy he accepted the portfolio of Foreign Affairs, and the first time he presented himself before Eugénie after his appointment he told her rather theatrically: "Les intérêts de la France ont été remis en de bonnes mains par l'Empereur, Madame, soyez en sûre" ("The interests of France have been confided by the Emperor into good hands, rest assured of that, Madame").

I did not know the Duc de Gramont well, and for that reason refrain from judging him. He has been accused of being the most guilty among the many guilty people to whom the responsibility of the unfortunate Franco-German War

may be attributed. Doctor Evans, in the very interesting memoirs published after his death, relates that at the time of the Duke's appointment at the head of foreign affairs, a foreign statesman whom he knew well used the following ominous words: "Believe me, this nomination is the forewarning of a Franco-German war."

It would not be fair to go as far as that, but I will say that the Duke was attacked more than any of his colleagues with the *folie des grandeurs*. Moreover, he was suffering acutely from the national vanity which felt itself thoroughly convinced that nothing could resist the courage of the French army. It did not strike him that this courage would be of no avail in the presence of the perfect discipline of the foe it would have to meet.

I must say, when I look back on this period which preceded the war, that a general uneasiness had pervaded the public mind ever since the constitution of the Ministry presided over by Emile Ollivier. No one trusted it, even among the personal friends of its head, and as a very clever woman, the Vicomtesse de Janzé, now Princesse de Lucinge, said at the time: "Its enemies do not trust it, and its supporters do not like it." The words were cruel, but very true.

The last twelve months of the Empire's existence saw vanish from the political, and indeed from this earthly scene, three men who had once played a considerable part in the world, and whose names are remembered to this day: Montalembert, Berryer, and Lamartine. I never saw Lamartine, but had the honour to know Montalembert well, and to have been received often by Berryer, whose great figure considerably impressed me. It was impossible to feel for him anything else but the deepest, the most sincere respect. He was an admirable example of fidelity to principles, of convictions

that the vicissitudes of life cannot change, and that even the errors of those who represent them cannot weaken. He died as he had lived, a Legitimist, believing in the divine right of kings, and determined to uphold his ideals to the end. Throughout his career he retained a wide sympathy in his estimates of men and of things, and an indulgence for the imperfections of those with whom he came into contact. Though he would permit no compromise with his own conscience, he realised very well that other people were different, and that he must make allowances. Though very disdainful, he was not vindictive in his old age, whatever he might have been in his youth, and the admirable serenity which pervaded all his judgments and opinions reminded me very often of the beautiful sunset of a beautiful day.

Montalembert, though broken by illness more than by old age, had, nevertheless, kept some of that brilliant and caustic wit for which he had been famous, and which had amused me so much when I first saw him in the early 'sixties. He was of that school of French Catholics who had never been able to shake off the influence of Lamennais, and to whom the exuberance of men like Veuillot was simply insufferable. The question of the Papal infallibility, which had been submitted by Pius IX. to the Vatican Council just before his death, had been the last great preoccupation of Montalembert, who could not reconcile himself to what, in his eyes, was a disastrous measure. His religion was of the broadest, and in his last years he looked at things with less partisan enthusiasm, and more clearness of judgment. I believe that in his inmost heart he regretted sometimes having violently separated himself from Lamennais, with whom he had worked on the famous paper *L'Avenir*. He never owned it, however; he always said that intentions were what must be considered and thought of, and that it was by their inten-

tions, more than by their actions, that people ought to be judged. In his way Charles de Montalembert was just as great a figure as Berryer, whom he only survived by a few months.

As for Lamartine, his death brought back to the public mind all the events which had preceded the proclamation of the Second Empire, and that period during which he had been at the head of the Republic, whose triumph he was not destined to see. Cruel material losses had reduced him almost to penury, and his only means of existence was a pension which, unknown to many, he received from the private purse of the Emperor, who had had the delicacy to extend it to him in such a way that the poor poet never knew to whom he owed the gift.

This reminds me of one of the nicest remarks that Napoleon III. ever made in his life. When he was asked why he insisted so much on Lamartine never learning who was his secret benefactor, the Emperor replied that " France owed so much to M. de Lamartine, that it would be a great shame if he was made to feel he had need to be grateful to its Sovereign."

The year 1869 had come to an end under a cloud, which even the Empress's triumphs in Egypt and at Constantinople had not brightened. Napoleon III. was worried, not only by the political situation, but also by the state of his health. Notwithstanding the absence of his Consort he invited people to Compiègne as usual, and there several persons besides myself noticed that he looked ill and tired, and that his eyes had an anxious expression which had never been observable before. He showed himself even more affectionate than usual towards his son, and was heard sometimes to sigh whilst watching him. Nevertheless, no one suspected that anything was radically wrong, and not a single man or woman among those

who were gathered in the Castle thought that it was the last time that they would be the guests of the Sovereign who welcomed them with such kindness and affability. Among all those who passed their hours in amusement in the Salle des Gardes, or in the long gallery where meals were served, not one recognised that a hand was already writing on the wall the same fatal words that appeared during the Babylonian monarch's last banquet.

## CHAPTER V

### Before the Storm

When the news of the candidature of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to the Spanish throne reached me, together with a letter from my Ambassador urging my return to Paris, I was staying in a little village on the coast of Normandy. Though I started at once for the capital, I could hardly bring myself to believe in the possibility of a war between France and Prussia. The thing appeared to me to be quite impossible, especially in view of a conversation I had had with the Emperor immediately after the results of the Plebiscite of May, 1870, had become known. I had ventured to offer to the Sovereign my congratulations upon the new triumph he had obtained. Napoleon III. seemed also delighted, and though it was most unusual for him to be demonstrative, yet he did not, on that occasion, attempt to hide what he was feeling, going so far as to tell me that the results of the Plebiscite in his opinion "had not only consolidated the dynasty, but also had done away with the legend that represented him as desirous of a foreign war in order to add to his prestige." "No one can say so at present," added the Emperor, "because, after France has so positively affirmed its allegiance to the Empire, it would be madness for me to risk losing popularity through a war which, even if victorious, would always materially impoverish the country."

Napoleon III. did not seem to have noticed that M. Rouher had at once observed that the vote of Paris had

been distinctly hostile to him, and that as things were organised, it was Paris which overthrew dynasties and governments.

But that wisdom which is born of attentive observation of the events of the world, as well as of outward and sometimes insignificant circumstances that lead on to their development, seemed to be absent from the thoughts of the principal politicians who, at that particular moment of her history, held in their hands the destinies of France. Neither the Emperor nor his responsible advisers saw farther than the victory of the moment, and they all rejoiced together at the new triumph which they had won for themselves, as well as for the party which they represented.

A few days after the Plebiscite, I happened to be calling on a social celebrity, the Countess de Castiglione, about whom so much has been written and said. Nature had been generous to her in many ways, but she was not destined to keep her fairness much longer than a rose its freshness. At the time of which I am speaking, she had barely reached her thirtieth year, and was already the ghost of her former self. I don't think I have ever met a woman who faded so quickly; I have often thought about it, and come to the conclusion that her beauty was so dazzling that it obliterated the imperfections it possessed, just as the Neapolitan or Sicilian sun prevents us from noticing aught else but the brilliance of the places it lights up with its rays. At the first glance, her loveliness literally took one's breath away, as it did mine the first time I saw her in 1868, when already she was going down hill. I can therefore imagine what she must have been at the time she first startled Paris by her glorious complexion and extraordinary beauty, and conquered the senses if not the heart of the Emperor.

Madame de Castiglione, without being the very clever woman she has been represented by some, nor the stupid one

she has been described by others, was possessed of an intelligence that was certainly above the average, but completely spoiled, her severe critics said, by an inordinate vanity, which prostrated her at the feet of her own beauty, and made everything in her life subservient to it. She firmly believed that she had only to show herself to conquer, and in a certain sense it was quite true, until the numerous victims of her charms learned to know her well. She had been sent to France by her cousin, the great Cavour, with a mission to influence Napoleon III. in favour of the cause of Italian independence. In a certain sense she succeeded, though much of her success can be attributed to the personal sympathies of the Emperor as well as to the rash promises of which had been so generous in regard to the various secret societies and associations with which he had been connected in his youth. But he was a master in the art of flattery, and it pleased his fancy to allow the young and lovely woman to think that she, and she alone, had been the means of Italy attaining her liberty. Madame de Castiglione thereafter took herself *au sérieux*, and believed she was a political heroine.

Later on, however, clouds came to obscure the horizon of her successes; the sensation caused by the lovely Italian very soon vanished, and though she was talked about a great deal in society, though painters still raved about her, and old men devoured her with their eyes, whilst young ones sighed at her feet, though women grew green with envy when they saw her enter a room, certain it is that her success was neither a long nor a permanent one. As a dream she flitted through that brilliant, frivolous society of the Second Empire, and as a dream she vanished into the darkness of the night that overtook it.

The curious thing in the career of Madame de Castiglione was the way in which she used to come and go, the eclipses

her personality underwent, and the notoriety that, now and then, arose in regard to her. There had been a day when she was asked to leave France altogether, but then she very soon returned to it, more arrogant, more haughty, more than ever ardent in resuming a political rôle. But she did not like Napoleon III., whom, perhaps, she did not forgive for the light-heartedness with which, after all, he had treated her. Though she would never have owned to it, she knew in her inmost heart that he had taken her as he would have taken any other pretty woman weak enough to have been dazzled. Madame de Castiglione was then in the glory of her youth and beauty, and she may well be forgiven. Principles she had few, religion and morals still less, or she would not, upon more occasions than one, have forgotten the great name she bore, or the high social position she enjoyed, and accepted, for instance, the banknotes of Lord Hertford, and of many others.

A curious trait in that celebrated woman's character was her pride in what others generally hid from the eyes of the world. A characteristic anecdote can be told on this subject. One day, as one of the very few friends she had left was talking with her of that period of the Empire when she had been its brightest star, suddenly Madame de Castiglione exclaimed: "I shall take care that even after I am dead the world shall know how great I was whilst it lasted"; and with a cynicism such as she alone would have been capable of, she rang the bell, and turning towards the maid who had appeared in answer to it, "Luisa," she said, "montrez à Monsieur, la chemise de nuit de Compiègne." And when an elaborate garment all batiste and lace was brought to her, she added: "I shall leave instructions to bury it with me."

To come back to what I was saying at the beginning of this chapter, I had called upon Madame de Castiglione just

after the Plebiscite, and naturally the conversation turned towards that event. The Countess listened very seriously to all the remarks exchanged between the two or three people who were present in the room, and at last surprised us considerably by saying: "You are all mistaken; the Plebiscite will not consolidate the dynasty. Up to now neither Italy nor Prussia thought that it could maintain itself *à la longue* in France, where it was firmly believed that no political regime was able to last beyond a few years. The results of the Plebiscite have proved that this conviction was an erroneous one; and the consequences will be that both these nations will use their best endeavours to inveigle the Emperor into a war. It is very well known that France is unprepared. Such an event will naturally throw her back into a state of revolution, and for a time will wipe her off the European slate."

No reply was made to this extraordinary remark, but when we went out together with Alphonse Rothschild, who had been one of those who had heard her, he turned to me and said with the clear insight of a financier, combined with the cleverness of a diplomat and his experience of the world: "How that woman hates the Emperor."

And now as I was hastening back to Paris on that July day of the year 1870, I remembered both the remark of the Baron and the tone of animosity with which the Countess de Castiglione had spoken on that occasion, and something like apprehension suddenly seized me, apprehension I did not know of what, but of a danger which I felt rather than saw, swooping down upon this brilliant society of the Second Empire, which I had grown to like so much and so well.

I reached Paris late in the evening of July the 16th, twenty-four hours after war had been declared, and was struck by the extraordinary aspect of the people who crowded the

boulevards. Much to my surprise they were singing the forbidden Marseillaise, and altogether they presented an excited appearance. The cafés were full, and from time to time someone would stand up, and scream loudly: "À Berlin!" whereupon the mob took up that cry, and vociferated in its turn, "À Berlin! À Berlin!" All Paris seemed to have gone mad, but already, in spite of what has been said to the contrary, remarks were heard hostile to the Emperor and to the government, who, it was said, had not soon enough tried to avenge the insult which France had received, but had done their best to prevent the outbreak of a war which, as someone remarked in my presence that same evening, "was indispensable to the dignity and the greatness of the country." To attempt reasoning with such folly was out of the question. I stopped the cab which had brought me from the station, and, alighting near one of the cafés on the boulevards, sat down under the pretext of having something to drink, but in reality to observe the scenes that were taking place. All the windows and balconies were full of people looking down in the street below, and watching the movement of the crowd, listening to its warlike cries. And later, when the theatres were over, the boulevards seemed to fill even more than they had been before. Women appeared wearing the national colours, and above the noise, the shouts, the movements of that great agglomeration of human beings, resounded again one great acclamation, one immense cry: "À Berlin! À Berlin!"

When at last I reached our Embassy, I found that consternation prevailed; not at the war, though everybody agreed that anything more foolish than the circumstances that had led to it had never been seen, but at the weakness displayed by the government, which certainly ought to have checked that exuberance of public opinion, and prevented

manifestations that at any moment might turn against itself. Then surprise was expressed at the disorderly attitude displayed by the troops when starting for the frontier, as already one or two regiments had done that morning. No one ventured to make a prediction as to what the future was holding in reserve, but serious apprehensions were entertained concerning the ultimate fate of the Emperor and of his dynasty.

That last feeling was very general, and I found it prevailed among all the foreigners then at Paris. Two or three days after my return to the capital, I called upon an old friend of mine, Madame Jules Lacroix, an extraordinary old woman, a Russian by birth, whose sister was the widow of the novelist Balzac, and who had made her home in France ever since her marriage with M. Lacroix, the brother of the famous novelist known under the pseudonym of " Bibliophile Jacob." Madame Lacroix presided over one of the pleasantest salons of the time; within its walls one was always sure to meet some important and interesting persons. She had been a great friend of Morny, and though her family had been Legitimists—she used to boast of her alliances with the Bourbons through Queen Marie Leszczinska, her aunt many times removed—all her sympathies were with the Napoleonic dynasty. She possessed a villa in St. Germain, where she used to spend her summers, and was there at the time the war broke out. I went to dine with her in the endeavour to find out something about the events that had brought about the present crisis.

Madame Lacroix received me with effusion, and talked of little else than the war, and of the consequences it would have. To my great surprise, however, I did not find her by any means so enthusiastic as I had expected, rather she was subdued and anxious She related to me that her great friend General Castelnau, one of the aides-de-camp of the Emperor, who was later on to share his captivity, did not

look at the situation with over-confident eyes, and that he had given her to understand that he had some apprehensions as to the ability of the army to come out victorious from the struggle it was about to enter.

"The Emperor is more ill than one supposes," added Madame Lacroix, "and should his strength fail him, who can take his place at the head of the army? Indeed, it would be far better if he did not attempt at all to lead it, because his presence in Paris will be more necessary than at the frontier. Suppose a revolution breaks out here, who is to confront it? The Empress is too unpopular through her clerical leanings to inspire confidence in a nation that has lost every respect for priests and their protectors."

Several episodes were then related concerning the deliberations which had taken place at St. Cloud during the momentous days before the solemn question of war or peace had been decided. It seems that when the first telegrams from Berlin announcing the candidature of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern for the Spanish throne had arrived in Paris, the Duke de Gramont had immediately sent them to the Emperor, though it was in the middle of the night, and that in a long conversation which he had subsequently held with his Sovereign, he had insisted on the affront such a candidature represented for France. Why it was an affront probably the Duke himself could not have properly explained.

On the contrary, the Empress, who was afterwards to be represented as having done all that was in her power to decide Napoleon to declare war against Prussia, had been far from urging him to it, if we are to believe what I heard on that day at Madame Lacroix's. It seems that when it was found to be impossible to resist the public clamour for revenge against this insolence of Prussia, as the chauvinists, who held the upper hand at that moment, were pleased to call the

Hohenzollern candidature, the Empress was very much upset, and to General Castelnau, who saw her come out from her room with red eyes and in great agitation, she said that she felt very anxious and very much afraid at the responsibility that was to become hers when she would be left as Regent alone in Paris. The General then advised her not to allow the Prince Imperial to accompany his father to the frontier, upon which she exclaimed: "Oh! I can't keep him here, he will be much safer amidst the army than with me!" Singular remark for a mother to make.

Altogether it seems to me, from what I had opportunity to hear, that at this crisis of her life Eugénie entirely lost her head, and that from its very outset allowed outward circumstances and impressions to obscure her clear judgment. I have been told that she was extremely superstitious, and firmly believed that what she once described in one of her conversations with an intimate friend as "the obstinacy" of the Emperor in not imposing the weight of his authority upon King Victor Emmanuel, to oblige him to abandon his secret ambitions to annex to his crown the territory of the Holy See, would prove fatal to him as well as to the Bonaparte dynasty. She was a fervent and devout Catholic and, in addition to her misgivings as to the future, feared the wrath of God.

I was not present when the Emperor left St. Cloud and looked for the last time on his home of so many happy years, but I am told that nothing could be sadder than this departure, so very different from that other occasion, some ten years before, when, amidst the hurrahs of the Parisian population, he had started for the Italian frontier to take part in a struggle the end of which had been so glorious. And yet the present war was a great deal more popular than had been that of 1859. Not only was it desired, but almost imposed on the

Sovereign, by a nation who would never have forgiven him had he not acceded to her wishes. And yet, when Napoleon took leave of his wife, his Ministers, and the members of his household, on that eventful 28th of July, though few eyes were dry in bidding him good-bye, the country over which he had ruled for eighteen years did not unite in wishing him God-speed. On the eve of the greatest catastrophe of modern times, an atmosphere of foreboding was already making itself felt in the sadness of that early departure.

When the Sovereign had gone, a period of anxious waiting ensued. Paris got wilder and wilder, became more and more riotous. One of the Empress's familiar friends called upon her one day at St. Cloud, before she had left that residence to return to the capital, and thought it his duty to draw her attention to that fact, and to express to her his apprehensions that the excitement might have serious consequences should any reverse happen to the army. She replied with vivacity: "Oh, not only in case of reverse, also in case of victory, the nation only wants a pretext to get rid of us."

These words are remarkable, and, so far as I know, no one had voiced such sentiments before; they reveal on the part of the Regent a state of discouragement which explains, perhaps, her total collapse when the dreaded crisis at last occurred; maybe it was this belief which led to the indifference with which she submitted to a destiny which she had accepted as foreordained, and against which she had recognised the utter futility of rebelling.

She was leading a feverish existence, which left her little time to think over her difficult position, or to make plans concerning her own future. After having tried to imbibe the enthusiasm with which she was told the declaration of war against Prussia had been received in the whole of France, she was now realising how little grounds there had been for

it. Before even the earliest news of the first disasters of this deplorable campaign had been brought to her, she had prepared herself for the worst, and believed in the worst, though when that worst came it was to surpass all that she had most dreaded or imagined.

Before she decided to leave St. Cloud, she went for a walk in the park with one of her ladies in waiting. On the last evening she gave way to the apprehensions that were torturing her soul. The sun was setting after a glorious day, and the Imperial residence had never seemed so beautiful, nor so peaceful; a peace in such contrast to the agitation of the country, that the Empress could not refrain from remarking upon it. Her companion tried to cheer her with words of hope and encouragement: "No," replied Eugénie, "I have no hope left, and if I could still wish for something, it would be to stop the course of time; to have a few more hours to look upon St. Cloud and its gardens; but see," she added, and pointed with her hand towards the sun that was slowly disappearing below the horizon, "see, this is how our prosperity is also setting, and who knows what will happen in the night that is falling upon us!"

And covering her face with her hands, she who was still Empress of the French sobbed bitterly.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Disaster

When the war broke out, I had just obtained a long leave which I intended to spend in Russia, and immediately after my return to Paris began to make preparations for my departure. The situation, however, was getting so very interesting that I kept putting off my vacation from day to day, especially after the first reverses had proved to every impartial observer that the days of the Bonaparte dynasty were numbered.

No one, however, imagined that the campaign would so very quickly decide the momentous questions that were hanging in the balance. The government was doing its very best to prevent news from leaking out and to hide from Paris, as well as from the country in general, the extent of the first reverses that the French army had encountered. This was a great mistake in more senses than one, because it allowed the wildest rumours to get about, which would not have been possible had the truth been made known at once. Had she only shown frankness and decision, the Regent might still have succeeded in rallying around her a considerable proportion of the people desirous of maintaining public order. To secure that, her best course would have been to appeal publicly to the whole nation; to point out that the refusal of the Chambers to grant the necessary military credits the government had asked for a year before had contributed to the disaster that had overtaken France; and then to declare

that she was going to do her best to negotiate an honourable peace. Above all things she should never have convoked the Chambers, the more so that constitutionally she had no real right to do so. The Emperor himself pointed this out later on, in a memorandum which he wrote for one of his great friends, Le Comte de la Chapelle, and he very justly remarked that by doing it a pretext was given for revolution to break out. But the impulsive Empress only thought that the return of Napoleon, vanquished and defeated in his capital, would expose him to insult, and endanger the dynasty; therefore, she urged him to keep away.

Émile Ollivier, who had judged differently, entreated her to insist on Napoleon's return to Paris, but Eugénie, instead of listening to his advice, did her best to thwart it, under the mistaken idea that with another Cabinet she had more chances to meet the difficulties of the situation. From some strange reasoning she interfered with MacMahon's plan to draw his army back towards Paris in order to defend the capital, and gave him peremptory command to join Marshal Bazaine's army. Stranger still, MacMahon, who, being responsible for his troops, should not have allowed politics to interfere with his plan of campaign, acceded to her request, and marched to his destruction in the direction of Sedan.

That initial mistake of the Regent was the principal cause of the revolution which followed upon the surrender of the French army to the Prussians. I do not mean to say that this revolution might have been averted in the long run, but certainly it might have been delayed, and some attempts might have been made to save the dynasty. Unfortunately the Empress thought she was acting very cleverly by seeming to give no thought to that dynasty, and affecting indifference as to its fate. She allowed the romantic side of her character to take the upper hand even in that supreme

disaster of her life, and refused to give the necessary orders that might, perhaps, have averted a catastrophe not only where the Imperial regime was concerned, but also to the country. She refused to defend the Tuileries; she refused to defend the cause of order which she represented; she refused to defend her throne and that of her son; she refused to act energetically, in order to subdue the insurrection that was already making itself heard under her windows; she refused to meet the mob that was invading the palace; and ultimately she fled.

It has been said that she was betrayed by those upon whose devotion she had the right to count. It is not to be contested that the conduct of General Trochu was cowardly, but the misfortune of Eugénie was that she had never succeeded in inspiring any other feeling than admiration for her beauty.

It is extraordinary, when one remembers all that happened at that time, to realise how each and all lost their heads. There was still a government in Paris on the 4th of September, there was an army, a responsible ministry that might have appealed to it, and yet no one seemed to have thought it possible to resist the demands of the mob—and such a mob, too. I think I may affirm that none were more surprised at the easy way the Empire was overturned than the members of the government that succeeded to the administration of the country. As a proof of this, I may mention a remark made to me many years later by Gambetta in the course of a conversation which we had on the subject: "I did not know when I left the Hotel de Ville after the proclamation of the new government, whether I should not find the police waiting to arrest me when I reached my home," was what he said.

Had the Empress personally gone to the Corps Législatif and given orders to sweep away the mob about to invade

it, and to arrest Trochu, it is probable that the Parisians, cowed by her personal courage, would have acclaimed her, and cried out: "Vive l'Impératrice!" It is certain that no one would have harmed her, but Eugénie lost her presence of mind upon finding herself so utterly abandoned, and fled from the Tuileries, forgetting everything in the disorder of that moment.

Vague news concerning the disaster of Sedan had reached Paris in the course of the evening of the 2nd of September, rumours with no official authority to explain them, but which, nevertheless, circulated everywhere. Later on the Empress was reproached for not acting at once upon them by rallying around her the few partisans that were still left to the Empire. But she was not to blame for this apparent inactivity, because it was only the next day that she received the telegram from the Emperor confirming the dreadful news.

Among the diplomatic corps it had been known earlier, and commented upon as it deserved. In the late afternoon of the 3rd of September, I went out, and directed my steps towards the Tuileries. The palace seemed quite peaceful. The usual sentinels that were guarding it were all at their posts, and a crowd on the Place de la Concorde was neither numerous nor hostile, certainly nothing that pointed to insurrection.

Among the curious people that were standing in front of the palace I could hear remarks and comments on the catastrophe of the day before, but what struck me was that these remarks were not hostile to the Empire; on the contrary, words of regret were continually expressed, and many sympathised with the Emperor, and especially the Prince Imperial. After having waited for some time I turned my steps towards the Cercle de la Rue Royale, where, meeting some friends, I told them that I was surprised to find the capital so quiet,

and that I thought that the Empress would be well advised if she took advantage of this sympathetic attitude of the public, to attempt to negotiate a peace. Every well-wisher of France felt that peace was indispensable in order to avoid worse calamities. I was very much surprised when a man whom I knew to be well informed as a rule, replied that very probably the next day would see a proposition promulgated to depose the Emperor. He added the remarkable news—which surely was absurd—that this would be done at the secret instigation of the Regent, who believed the Prince Imperial's only chance of ascending the throne consisted in the removal of his father from the political scene.

I could not bring myself to believe such an unfair canard. Whatever has been said to the contrary since, Napoleon was always popular with a large section of people; the Parisian workmen especially liked him, and felt grateful for the care with which he had seen to their welfare. It is true there were some who screamed that he was responsible for the military disasters which had overtaken the country, but these belonged to that section of unruly spirits that take every possible opportunity to attack every government. It must not be forgotten that in spite of the *Lanterne* and other revolutionary organs of the same kind, the influence wielded by the press had not reached the power it now possesses; after eighteen years of Imperialistic rule, the country was disciplined and trained to obedience, and it is most probable that had the Emperor personally been able to make an appeal to it, it would have responded heartily. If the Regent could have obtained the liberation of her husband, and so secured his help to conclude peace with Prussia, such an ending to the campaign might have been possible at that particular moment—it was certainly not the time to talk of the sovereignty of the people and of bowing to the will of the country.

The evening passed off quietly. I walked along the boulevards after eleven o'clock; the night was beautiful, and the streets as animated as usual. I could not discern much consternation among the crowds, everyone seemed only to be more subdued than had been the case lately. And when I left my house on the morning of the 4th there were certainly no signs whatever of a revolution in the streets, nor any atmosphere of impending disaster.

I was living in the Avenue de l'Impératrice, now Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, and as I reached the Champs Elysées, I found that everything was as quiet as usual. The fountains were playing in front of the Palais de l'Industrie, children were romping in the walks, and there was no indication that anything unusual was going on. I went to breakfast at the Cercle, and it was only after leaving that I was accosted by a friend on the Place de la Concorde who told me that the Corps Législatif had been invaded by the mob. Curious as I am by nature, I turned my steps towards the Palais Bourbon, and found really an enormous crowd assembled there; but even then, there was nothing hostile in its attitude, it was rather good-humoured than anything else. Some leaders, however, were shouting: "La déchéance! La déchéance," at the top of their voices. No one seemed to offer any resistance, and the attitude of the deputies, when I managed to enter the gallery reserved to the Corps Diplomatique in order to obtain a view of what was going on inside the House, was rather one of surprise than anything else. Amidst the hum of voices could be heard the deep tones of M. Jules Ferry urging those present to go to the Hotel de Ville and to proclaim the Republic, but with the exception of Jules Favre, and of M. de Kératry, no one seemed to share his opinion. I am convinced that if, at that moment, the Regent had occupied the Palais Bourbon with a military force, the Revolu-

tion would never have succeeded, and to this day I fail to understand how it was that no member of the government had the presence of mind to take upon himself the responsibility for such a measure, which might have changed the whole history of France. It is quite certain that even when the three leaders of the Revolutionary movement started for the Hotel de Ville, they did not possess the sympathy of many of their colleagues, rather, the latter only wanted the support of the government then in power, to get rid of them. None would have objected to the arrest of these three men, had there been found but one person strong enough to put such a measure into execution.

The fact is, the majority of the members of the Corps Législatif seemed to be quite dazed by what was happening; they did not at all understand what was going on. I am convinced that they left the hall where the sitting had taken place, without having realised that it was for the last time. As soon, however, as they had done so, the mob invaded the Palais; but the scenes of disorder that are asserted to have followed, never took place. I remained some time unobserved at my post, and failed to see the excesses of which some speak as occurring. Of course, shouts were heard, a boy of about eighteen years old sat down in the Presidential armchair, and rang the bell with all his might, but this was done more in childish amusement than anything else. I repeat that the slightest appearance of a military force would have restored order at once, and this makes the subsequent events more unpardonable still.

After having spent about an hour watching the scenes that attended the end of the Legislature which, under Napoleon III., had ruled France for eighteen years, I left the Palais Bourbon and turned my steps towards the Tuileries. There the crowd was more hostile, especially the Garde Nationale.

The men had turned their rifles upside down, and some of them were screaming aloud they would never fire against "la nation." Now and then a cry resounded: "La déchéance! La déchéance," and the accents of the Marseillaise made themselves heard; but it must be remarked that no cries of "Vive la République!" were to be noticed, at least I did not hear any. Another strange feature of this pacific revolution was that the mutineers were in small bands, which were each followed by a considerable crowd of onlookers, which probably would have dispersed at sight of the first company of soldiers. The police had mysteriously vanished, and the whole aspect of the crowd was good-natured in the extreme; it was composed of as many women, children and dogs as of *insurgés*, and seemed more on amusement bent than on anything else. Even when the gates of the Tuileries were at last forced, and the mob found itself in the big courtyard, it did not attempt to enter the interior of the Palace; the people merely walked about the garden and the inner courtyard that led from the Carrousel to the private gardens. Had the Empress remained she would not even have noticed the invasion, and the best proof of what I say here lies in the fact that when the members of the new government arrived a few hours later in the Tuileries, they found everything in the same state as usual; nothing had been disturbed, and even the papers forgotten by the Empress on her writing table had been left untouched, the servants were all there, but had only taken care to take off their liveries, with the alacrity which people of their class always display in turning against their former masters as soon as misfortune comes in any shape or form.

I was one of the persons who visited the Tuileries on the evening of that memorable 4th of September, which saw the fall of Napoleon III.'s dynasty. No one knew at that

moment what had happened to the Empress, nor where she had fled, and rumours were going about in some quarters that she had tried to join the Emperor, and in others that she had directed her steps towards Metz with the intention of seeking a refuge with the army of Bazaine, and establishing there the seat of government.

When I visited the Palace I found that no one there believed she had gone away for ever; indeed—and this is a detail that I believe has never been recorded elsewhere—I found one of her maids preparing her bed just as usual! It was evident the flight had been a hurried one. In the private rooms, letters never meant to be seen by a stranger's eye were scattered about; a gold locket with the portrait of a lovely woman, the Duchesse d'Albe; another one with that of a baby in long robes, the first picture of the Prince Imperial; one small golden crucifix; a note just begun, and addressed no one knows now to whom, but of which the first words ran thus: "Dans la terrible position où je me trouve, je ne——" The writing stopped there; evidently she who had started it had been interrupted by the bearer of some evil message, and there it lay forgotten, in the midst of the tragedy which had put an end to so many things and to so many hopes.

The Revolution of the 4th of September was especially remarkable for the inconsiderable impression it produced in Paris itself. Life went on just as usual, and save for a few expressions of wonder, no one seemed quite to realise the importance of it. The capital began to prepare for the siege, rather with mirth than anything else. To tell the truth no one seemed to believe in its possibility, and I remember one day, when visiting a friend who was living on the Quai Malaquais, she pointed to the Seine flowing softly under her windows, saying at the same time: "Croyez-vous que les Prussiens

arriveront devant mes fenêtres comme les Normands jadis sont entrés à Paris?" ("Do you think that the Prussians will arrive in front of my windows as the Normans entered Paris in days of yore?")

I reproduce this remark just to show how very little those in the capital realised either the present or the future at this particular moment.

Another thing which struck me, was that existence out of doors seemed to go on much as usual, in spite of the bad news that continued to pour in. The theatres were full, and people seemed to make the most of the late summer days that were coming to a close. There was very little excitement, and the feeling that predominated was one of curiosity. Some people were departing, but not in large numbers, and it was only towards the end of September that people began seriously to look at the situation. By that time I had already left Paris. I went on the 15th of September, hoping to return in January, not suspecting then that the war would drag on as it did. I, together with many reasonable people, still hoped that the new government would see the necessity of ending a hopeless struggle before it was too late.

All my suppositions turned out to be wrong, however, and it was only towards the end of February that I was once more to find myself at my old post, by which time the unfortunate Emperor, languishing in captivity, seemed to be forgotten, and the Republic had grown to be an established fact.

## CHAPTER VII

### Letters from Paris during the Siege

Paris was already invested when I succeeded in leaving it with the help of a diplomatic passport, and it was in Vienna that I read in the papers the news of the useless interview that took place between Prince, at that time still Count, Bismarck, with M. Jules Favre at Férrières. I never understood how the German Chancellor, who at that time had not the slightest intention to conclude peace, consented to receive the representative of a government which he had not acknowledged. I was told later on, that it was at the request of the King of Prussia he had given his assent to Favre's arrival at the German headquarters.

The results of this hopeless attempt are well known. Jules Favre talked as only an advocate can talk. But he pleaded sentimental reasons where hard facts only had to be considered. When he returned to Paris, it was with the conviction that as the government of the Défense Nationale was neither strong enough nor respected enough to compel the country to accept a shameful peace, the only thing was to allow matters to drift.

A good many of my friends, and of my colleagues, had elected to remain in the capital, and there await the end of the war, and I must own that I regretted later on that I had not been given the same opportunity. That period was most interesting, and I have always felt that to understand the genesis of the events which happened

later on, one ought to have experienced those months of anxiety, when the great capital was abandoned to her fate, with the Prussian guns levelled against her.

I was not, however, left entirely without news, and as regularly as was possible received letters from besieged Paris, sent either by balloon or by carrier pigeons. I have kept them all, and from their pages now give extracts which will give an idea of the feelings of the Parisians during the trial they had to undergo.

*September 25th*, 1870.

"My very dear Friend,—You will be wondering what is happening to us, and I do not want to let pass the present opportunity to send you some news concerning us. We are now quite resigned to the prospect of a siege, and the only question that is agitating the public mind is how long it will last. The most contradictory rumours are spread, and some of them even attribute to Jules Favre the intention of trying to restore the Empire, after having assured himself that he would remain its Prime Minister. Of course this is nothing but humbug, and I only mention it to you to show you to what extent public imagination can cajole itself. What is not humbug, however, is the difficulty the government finds in attempting anything in the way of peace negotiations. It begins to see the great mistake which was made when a small minority overthrew the Empire so unexpectedly. Had it been left standing, all the onus of the disastrous peace, which, whether France likes it or not, will have to be concluded, would have fallen upon its shoulders, whilst at the present moment, it is the Défense Nationale which will bear the brunt of anger at the dismemberment of our France. This may sound the death knell of the Republic, and those who are at its head know it but too well. I think that the

unlucky phrase of Jules Favre, when he said that he would never give up 'un pouce de notre territoire, ni une pierre de nos forteresses,' was more a calculated pronouncement than the result of an enthusiasm too strong to think of the consequences its imprudent words might have. He wanted to ward off the evil moment when he would be called upon to do that which the Empire he had helped to overthrow would have done had it been left in power; and feeling this to be inevitable, had tried to keep the knowledge of this bitter fact from the public. One begins to realise the mistake one has made, I repeat it, but unfortunately one does not see what ought to be done to mend it. The public feeling in the city is very different from that which was prevailing on the 4th of this month. The Parisians begin to realise the seriousness of the situation, but there is no talk of a surrender, and the confidence that victory will return to France is very dominant among the lower classes, whilst it is recognised among the higher ones that the deal has been irrevocably lost, and that peace ought to be concluded, else serious disturbances may occur among the Garde Nationale and the numerous militia.

"The government does nothing, and when I have said this, I say everything. They say that they can do nothing and that it is to the Tours delegation they must look for an attempt to stop the progress of the Prussian army. So long as Gambetta was here there was some activity in ministerial offices; now he has gone there is absolute stagnation. All these ministers, suddenly called upon to exercise functions for which they were totally unprepared, seem lost, and Jules Favre looks at the political situation with the same eye he would look at some big criminal or civil law case—from the outlook of an advocate, not from that of a statesman. They say he actually cried during his conversation with Bismarck.

The question arises whether these tears were genuine ones of grief, or simply a rhetorical incident. How much more dignity there was in the conduct of General Wimpffen and his colleagues, when they discussed with the German Minister and the German General Staff the conditions of the capitulation of Sedan! No one likes Jules Favre, whom even his partisans consider to be a demagogue of talent, but nothing more. And certainly France does not need demagogues at the present time.

"There are comical notes in the gravity of the situation. People talk about never surrendering, about dying for their country, whilst running about buying hams and butter, and as many provisions as they can, in view of the siege. Vegetables are at a premium, meat will soon become a luxury, bread is already looked upon in the same light that cakes were formerly, and frivolous women are getting excited at the thought of the many privations which they expect they will be called upon to endure. Yet comparatively few people have left the capital, where, after all, perhaps, one is safer than in the provinces. News leaks out sometimes from the outside, mostly false; for instance, it was related the other day, that the Prince Imperial had reached Metz, and put himself under the protection of Marshal Bazaine. All the partisans of the Empire believed it, but serious people did not attach any faith to this rumour. The Legitimists are full of hope that out of the present complications a monarchical restoration may ensue; the Radicals, on their part, are sure that, sooner or later, the government will fall into their hands. The principal question that is agitating the public mind, is as to who would eventually have the right to conclude peace with Prussia. No one, to begin with the members of the present administration (for one can hardly call it a government), believes that the King of Prussia would consent to treat

with them. Therefore the calling together of a National Assembly is imperative, but would this Assembly be the expression of the will of the nation, when the elections would have to be held under the muzzles of the enemy's guns? In a word, we live in a state of uncertainty such as France has never yet experienced, no one knows what the morrow holds in reserve, and though there is a government of the National Defence, yet there is no one to defend the country."

I have reproduced this letter in its entirety, because it seems to me that it explains very well the state of opinion in besieged Paris. Later on, I was to receive another communication from the same correspondent, written immediately after the insurrection of the 18th of October. This one is more alarming even than the first.

" We have had the other day," he writes on November 4th, " the first taste of that revolution which we shall not escape. It began by an *échauffourée* of the National Guard, and ended by an invasion of the Hotel de Ville by the mob. It was repulsed, but for how long? This is the question, and the population of the faubourgs is getting so excited that at the first opportunity it will most certainly again take the offensive, and this time with greater chances of success. Don't forget that, after all, we have no regular army in Paris worthy of that name, that arms have been distributed not only to the National Guard, but to a great part of the population; that, consequently, it is the latter, and not the pseudo-government, that in reality holds the power to impose its will upon the capital. One talks a lot about patriotism, believe me there is very little of patriotism about; all the politicians who have tried to persuade themselves that they have the qualifications of real statesmen, only think of their future,

and of the possibility of their own greatness rising out of the ruins of their fatherland. They do nothing else but talk; I wish they would work—it would be more to the point.

"I must tell you something that will surprise you. Rumours have been going about that the Prussian government had started some negotiations with the Empress in England. She is still Regent in name if not in fact, and her intervention, especially if it was strengthened by a demonstration of the army of Metz in her favour, might decide the King of Prussia to conclude an honourable peace, or at least one which would be termed honourable by every reasonable person. Well, will you believe me that a Bonapartist, quite *au courant* with what goes on, and who knows, moreover, the character of the Empress, told me that in his opinion she would always hesitate to take measures which might afterwards be attributed to her as proceeding from a desire to save the dynasty? She persists in that attitude which she has adopted from the outset, of putting France before everything, and of appearing to be careless of the interests of her family. She will not see that, at a time of such crisis, the interests of the dynasty are inseparable from those of the country, and that if by means of an intervention of the army of Metz in its favour she can conclude peace under more favourable conditions than those which Prussia would impose on a Republican government, it is her clear duty to do all that she can to achieve that result, no matter what reproaches might be hurled at her in the future. The Empire still has many partisans in France, especially among the working classes; they would most certainly have rallied around the Regent if it had been properly explained to them that she had saved the army of Metz from the fate that had overtaken that of Sedan, and, in consideration of this service, one would have forgiven her many things. Of course what I am telling you here

reposes on hearsay, and you most probably know more about it than we can here, separated as we are from the outside world; but I repeat it, strong rumours have been going about, that Eugénie has been approached by Prussia, who, it seems, is even more eager for peace than we are, and that it has been hinted to her that every facility would be granted to her to appeal to France, to help her out of the terrible situation in which both find themselves at present. Among a certain circle strong hopes were indulged at one time that these rumours would turn out to be true, consequently the news of the capitulation of Metz, which the Prussians took good care should reach us, came as a thunderbolt to the Bonapartists, who openly declared that it had been brought about through the refusal of the Empress, from mistaken dynastic reasons, to assume the responsibility of a peace, the conditions of which, including, as they necessarily must have done, a concession of territory, would have excited indignation throughout France.

"All that I am telling you is, of course, the result of my private observations, but these may interest you, in view of your Imperial sympathies.

"And now you shall ask me what I am doing personally in our poor besieged Paris. Well, I happened to be near the Hotel de Ville on that memorable 18th of October, and I was much interested in the motley crowd that assembled in front of it. What struck me extremely was the large contingent of women, who were trying either to help or to excite their husbands or friends. I did not think that Parisian females were so revolutionary, nor that they counted in their midst such a number of old hags worthy to rival the witches of *Macbeth* in appearance. I am afraid that if we see a real revolution—which God forbid, though I am inclined to think its advent is inevitable—the women will show themselves

ten times more ferocious than the men, and that the days of the *tricoteuses*, who dictated to the Convention in 1793, are not by any means over yet.

"The remnant of society left in the capital has bravely made up its mind not to eat, drink and be merry, but to go through all the hardships of the siege with good humour and resignation. People still see each other, and indeed social life has not changed, although the menus of the dinners to which one is invited are anything but luxurious. For instance, yesterday I was asked to lunch by my old friend Countess Stéphanie Tascher de la Pagerre, together with two other people, and this is what we were offered: a potage Liebig with macaroni, roasted horseflesh, fresh beans, and chocolate cream without cream, but made with tinned milk. With the most charitable feelings in the world, it would be impossible to say that it was good, or that anyone liked it.

"Clubs, too, are just as formerly, though they present the unusual sight of members dressed in uniform, who often come to lunch direct from the front, and who leave a rifle instead of a stick to the care of the hall porter, whilst they snatch a hasty and nasty meal. The theatres play just as usual; an ambulance has been organised in the foyer of the Comédie Française, and Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt is just as bewitching under the white cap and apron of a nurse as she was in her most gorgeous stage dresses. In short, the *comédie humaine* has become the *comédie parisienne*, notwithstanding the tragedy of Paris and of France."

This letter, penned by an American who had elected to remain in Paris during the siege, gives pretty well the idea of the spirit that prevailed among the Bonapartists, and the one which animated the *grand monde*, or at least those who had not fled abroad. To complete the picture, I must give

another letter, one from an old lady whose name I have already mentioned in these pages—Madame Lacroix, who had returned from St. Germain after the 4th of September, and, notwithstanding her great age, had remained in Paris, where her *salon* was the rendezvous of her numerous friends, and just as animated as it had been formerly.

"Our situation is always the same, just as lamentable and just as sad. Nothing seems to change around us, save the fact that provisions are getting scarcer and scarcer, that butter is not to be had for love or money, and that dogs, rats, and cats appear on the best tables in place of beef and mutton. Gas also is a thing of the past, and one has to exercise strict economy in oil and paraffin. I have now only one lamp burning in my drawing-room, which we take along with us when we go to the dining-room. The population begins to get exasperated at this heavy inaction that weighs upon it; the absence of all reliable news also tells on the hearts and minds. On the 29th of November we were awakened by the sound of the cannon, and one heard that at last the government had decided to make an effort to attack the enemy, in the endeavour to effect a junction with the army of the Loire, which, as it seems, was quite near to us; at least this is what our government choose to tell us. Trochu has published another proclamation, addressed to the population, just as devoid of common sense as all his previous ones have been. For about three days we were left absolutely without news, though it was rumoured that the Prussians had been defeated by Ducrot, but at last it leaked out that the plans of Trochu had failed, and that the effort made by the garrison of Paris had been unsuccessful.

"On the 5th of December we were startled by the news of the defeat of the army of Chanzy near Orleans, and I must

confess to you that now the most sanguine hopes have been shattered, and the only feeling left is the desire to see this nightmare under which we are living come to an end."

This letter was written just before the end of that sad year 1870, which had begun so brilliantly with a reception at the Tuileries, now standing deserted and abandoned by its former masters. In the first fortnight of January a curious incident occurred, which, I believe, has not been widely known among the public, but yet, in view of the events that happened later on, offers a certain interest. I will relate it in the words of the friend who informed me of it, the American whose letter I have already given:

"I am going to tell you something which will probably appear to you rather like a scene taken out of a comic opera, but which I am assured really took place the other day. A friend of the Orleans princes asked General Trochu to grant him an interview, and tried to win his support to a proposition to ask the Duke of Aumale to accept, if only for an intermediary period, the post of President of the National Defence. Trochu, after having indulged in the usual rhetoric of which he is so fond, at last pathetically replied that he had sworn fidelity to the Republic, and that as a soldier he could not break his oath; to this his visitor retorted that probably that oath was sworn on something he respected more than the one he had made to the Empress Eugénie when he told her she could rely on his honour as a soldier, a Catholic, and a Breton. Trochu was silent for a few minutes, and then said: 'J'ai fait passer la patrie avant tout lorsque——' 'Lorsque il s'est agi pour vous de vous mettre à la tête du gouvernement vous-même' ('I put my country first when——' 'When it was a question of placing yourself at the head of its government') interrupted the other.

" I cannot, of course, vouch for the truth of the anecdote, but it was told to me by a person who is generally well informed. But what I do know, is that very few people have been or are despised to the extent of General Trochu, for whom no one finds a good word to say, and everyone is hoping that his colleagues will oblige him either to sign the capitulation of Paris, which cannot be delayed much longer, especially now that the bombardment has commenced [this letter was written on the 25th of January], or else to resign his functions altogether. His dispatch of the 20th only confirmed the opinion one had as to his military ability, and certainly nothing could be more lamentable than the sight of the troops returning into the town after the battles of the 19th and 20th, weary, hungry, worn out, and exasperated against their leaders. That exasperation has again brought down from the faubourgs the agitators that have ever since the 4th of September kept Paris in a state of turmoil, and on the 22nd of January in the night they invaded the prison of Mazas, and delivered several political men detained there, among others Flourens. They also made an attempt to occupy the mairie of the 20th arrondissement. A battle has taken place opposite the Hôtel de Ville, and the government is entirely discredited; even among the former most determined partisans of war being continued at any price, the feeling prevails that peace, no matter on what conditions, would be better than the present state of things, which is only favourable to promoters of disorder, of which there are but too many."

As is known, the capitulation of Paris took place on the 28th of January, and I prepared myself at once to return. After a journey devoid of serious incidents, but long and fatiguing, I reached Versailles on the 31st of that month,

having taken four days to do so. I had started from Berlin, where I had been waiting for the first opportunity to return to my post in Paris. At Versailles I found M. Thiers, who was already busy negotiating the conditions of a peace that most certainly the Empress Regent, had she only taken the responsibility of its conclusion, would have been able to sign under more favourable clauses than those to which France had to submit. It is possible, if not probable, that the Imperial eagles would not have witnessed the entry of the German troops into Paris, a humiliation which old King William did not see the necessity to spare a Republic for which it was impossible to feel the least respect.

Before closing this chapter I must mention one letter among the many which reached me at Versailles during those days from friends who were in Paris, giving me some details concerning this crowning episode to the many sad and disgraceful ones that will make the war of 1870 for ever memorable.

*March 4th*, 1871.

" We were all waiting with anxiety for that 1st of March that was to see the German troops enter the capital. Grave apprehensions were entertained on the subject by many people, who declared that very probably the excited Parisians would indulge in demonstrations of hostility against the Prussians, which would assuredly have terrible consequences. On the 27th of February I called at Rothschild's bank in the Rue Lafitte, hoping to hear some news there, where they were generally better informed than anywhere else. One of the principal employees, whom I knew well, told me with tears in his eyes that no efforts of Jules Favre had availed, and that the German army would occupy Paris on the 1st, but that, as a last concession, that occupation would be limited to a certain zone, and not extend itself to the whole city.

Great preparations had been made, and the shopkeepers in the streets through which the troops of the enemy were to pass had declared that they would close their doors and shutters ' pour ne pas assister à cette honte,' as one of them told me himself; it was also tacitly understood that private houses would pull down their blinds. Curious to see how things would go on, and feeling convinced that, in spite of the apprehensions entertained in certain quarters, no disturbances of any kind would occur, Frenchmen being always cowed down whenever they see real strength before them, I was up very early, and, rejoicing at the splendid weather which had suddenly set in after very dark and gloomy days, as if to welcome the triumph of Prussia, I went down the Champs Elysées, and was present when the first German detachments made their appearance. The sight was imposing, and could only suggest many philosophical thoughts. The greatest discipline prevailed, and this discipline seemed to make a great impression on the numerous throngs that lined the streets to see the unusual spectacle. A few women were weeping with a certain affectation, but there were also some girls smiling and welcoming with glances full of coquetry the Prussian officers riding in front of their regiments. At about four o'clock everything was over, and the soldiers settled in the cantonments which had been allotted to them for the night. The next day the sight was stranger still. The population of Paris, notwithstanding what may have been told to you to the contrary, had fraternised with the enemy, and one saw the usual *camelots* that appear in the streets of Paris whenever there is something new to see, offer to the Prussian soldiers cigarettes, matches, and newspapers, whilst girls timidly extended some flowers to them—not, however, before looking carefully around them to see whether anyone watched them doing so. When, on the 3rd of March, the German

troops retired, I heard that typical remark, from a woman who had been watching their going away with eager eyes: 'Après tout, ce sont de beaux soldats que ceux-là!' she cried.

"It seems that a solemn moment occurred during the review held by the new Emperor on the Hippodrome de Longchamps, before the troops started to enter Paris. I have been told the sight was most imposing, and must have roused a world of remembrances in the heart of its principal hero. What must have been his thoughts at a moment when the history, as it were, of a whole century was suddenly recapitulated before his eyes? His fate had made him witness the present triumph, after the humiliations of Jena and that first occupation of the French capital by the allied troops in 1815, when another Napoleon had seen fortune retire from him! It seems that after the review was over, the Emperor looked wistfully for a considerable time at the long line of troops filing along on their triumphal journey, and before dismounting from his horse he turned towards the Crown Prince with the simple remark, 'I hope that you, too, have thanked God to-day!'"

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Commune

As already mentioned, I returned to Versailles during the last days of January, and, except a short visit to Paris, whither I went to see after my household gods which had been left to their fate during the siege, and to inquire after the friends who had remained in the capital during those anxious months, I stayed there until I left for Bordeaux, where the National Assembly met in order to ratify the conditions of the peace that was ultimately to be signed in Frankfurt.

At Bordeaux, to my great surprise, I found that the sole topic of popular conversation was the declaration of the overthrow of the Bonaparte dynasty. It seemed as if that was the principal object of the elections that had taken place, and that it was far more important than the establishing of an understanding with Germany. The ambitions of the different parties which divided public opinion in France had been newly awakened at the unforeseen chances which they suddenly saw looming before them. Orleanists, Legitimists and Republicans were all eager to come forward with schemes to take the place of the regime that had so recently come to a tragic close. I remember that one evening after dinner I was sitting together with some friends in one of the most elegant restaurants of Bordeaux, and we listened to a discussion that was taking place at the next table, and during which the chances of the different parties that the country

had sent to represent it at the National Assembly were enumerated. What struck me in this conversation was that France itself was not even mentioned; it seemed as if the catastrophes that had accompanied the war had swept it from the face of the earth, and had only left political parties and political convictions, the leaders of which wanted to find some personal advantage out of the general disasters. Another thing I also observed that appeared even then strange to me, and it seems stranger still to-day—it is that very few people believed the Republic would be able to maintain itself. On the contrary, they felt convinced that France was standing upon the threshold of a Monarchist restoration. The Orleans princes had a considerable number of adherents, and were made much of in certain quarters, where the courage displayed by the Duc de Chartres and the Prince de Joinville, who had joined the Republican armies as volunteers, was extolled at every opportunity; whilst the Legitimists kept hoping that the Comte de Chambord would seize the opportunity and rally himself to the tricolour flag, thus to clear his path to the throne of his ancestors. The Republicans seemed still surprised and dazed by the unexpected events that had raised them to power, and did not believe that their party would succeed in maintaining itself at the head of the country. I believe that if the Orleans princes had been generous enough to forgo the millions that had been confiscated under Napoleon III., and which they hastened to claim from the State, they would have been able easily to provoke a manifestation in their favour that would eventually have led to a restoration of their dynasty. The government was thoroughly discredited, in spite of the great influence wielded by Leon Gambetta, in whom everyone saw the man of the future, and it was generally felt that it would not be strong enough to compel the country to accept the heavy peace

conditions which Germany was determined to enforce. Unfortunately, among all the representatives of the nation who met at Bordeaux, there was not a man daring enough, and brave enough, to suggest the recall of any of the pretenders. On the other hand, the Bonapartes had still a considerable number of partisans, who did their best to paralyse every effort to substitute another dynasty. They hoped that, in spite of Sedan, France would remember the eighteen years of prosperity which it had just gone through, and would recall the child who had been so popular, under the name of "le petit Prince," until the catastrophe that had sent him together with his parents in exile on British shores.

The only one who appreciated rightly the intricacies of the situation such as it presented itself, and who very cleverly played his cards, in such a manner that he made himself indispensable, was M. Thiers. He flattered everybody, promised everything that was required of him, gave every pledge that he was asked for, and finally secured his own unanimous election at Bordeaux, by the National Assembly, as chief of the executive power—one did not dare yet to use the term President of the French Republic.

The new head of the government very soon made himself the master of the situation, and his influence became in a short time paramount in everything. He rapidly brought to a close the peace negotiations with Germany, and on the 26th of February its preliminaries were signed at Versailles.

M. Thiers returned to Paris, determined to settle down to the task of mending the many sores and wounds which the months that had just elapsed had left behind them. Unhappily he found himself confronted by a situation far more dangerous than he had expected, owing to the want of foresight of Jules Favre, who had not had the courage to resist

the foolish demands of the mob, and who, obeying the orders which he had received from the leaders of the extreme Radical party, had during the peace negotiations with Prince Bismarck insisted upon the Parisian population being allowed to retain their rifles, and the National Guards not being disarmed. In a curious book called " Journal d'un Officier d'Ordonnance," an aide-de-camp of General Trochu, Comte d'Hérisson, relates that Bismarck replied to these demands with the prophetic words: " I am willing to accede to your request, but believe me you are acting stupidly."

Stupidity or not, the National Guard was left in possession of its weapons, and the first thought of M. Thiers when he reached Paris was to take them away. But this was not so easy; the National Guard was for the greater part composed of excitable men who dreamed only of the sovereignty of the mob. When the hour for laying down their arms arrived, the Guard refused to do so, and the rebellious feelings which had been brewing ever since the revolution of the 4th of September broke out at last into a fury that culminated in the brutal assassination of two generals, Clément Thomas and Lecomte, who had been sent by the government to disarm the National Guard.

Much has been written about the day which saw the beginning of the Commune; I will merely add a few quite personal remarks, which, perhaps, will make the reader understand more clearly than a long narrative the state of mind of the Parisian population at that particular moment.

The insurrection of the 18th of March had come quite unawares upon the authorities, who had neither foreseen it nor attempted to crush it, which would have been easier than generally believed, but unfortunately everybody seemed so overpowered by surprise that the simplest measures of

precaution were disregarded, and what was at first but a revolt was soon transformed into a revolution through the negligence of the very people who ought to have been guiltless of carelessness at this grave juncture.

This is not an historical book, consequently I am not going to relate the details of the flight of M. Thiers to Versailles as soon as he heard of the revolt of Montmartre, and of the assassination of Clément Thomas and Lecomte, but I am going to speak of what I myself had occasion to observe on that memorable 18th of March which marked the beginning of the Commune.

I had gone out of my house on the morning of that day, quite unconscious that anything like a revolution, or even a mutiny, was in the air. As chance would have it, I had the necessity to go to Montmartre to see an old servant who had been in the army and was severely wounded at that sortie which Ducrot had attempted just before Paris capitulated. The man was living not far from the Rue des Rosiers, which was to become so memorable. When I reached the last-mentioned street I found it invaded by a most threatening and angry crowd, which kept howling: "Vive la Commune! Vive la révolution sociale!" Realising that matters were getting dangerous, I hastily retraced my steps, and hoped that I should succeed in escaping the attention of the mob, when one of the National Guard stopped me and asked what I was seeking and why I had come there. He would not listen to my explanations, and suddenly said: "Toi tu me fais l'effet d'être un Prussien, montres donc tes papiers" ("You look like a Prussian, just show me your papers"). When I said I had not got them about me, he took me by the arm and said: "Toi, mon garçon, tu iras t'expliquer au poste, allons, marche en avant, ou sinon——" ("Now, my lad, you will go and explain yourself at the guardhouse,

march, or else——") He showed me his rifle. Seeing that things were getting serious, I told my tormentor that if he wanted to be reassured as to my identity, he had better take me to the mayor of the 12th arrondissement, M. Clemenceau, who knew me personally and could vouch that I was not a Prussian spy, which he was taking me for. The man looked at me sharply, and then said: "Clemenceau, Clemenceau, mais avec celui là on ne sait jamais ce qu'il va faire, ce n'est pas un pur" ("Clemenceau, Clemenceau, one never knows what he is up to, he isn't straight"). I have never forgotten this remark, which perhaps explains better than anything else the strange attitude of M. Clemenceau on that day, and the timidity which he displayed. He has, I know but too well, been bitterly accused of having witnessed, without trying to save them, the execution of the two unfortunate generals. In justice to him, I must say, first of all, that he arrived upon the scene when the executions were already over, and secondly, that his efforts would have probably been quite useless, as at that time he was himself held in suspicion by the leaders of the rebellious movement.

I do not know how my adventure would have ended if by chance one of the National Guard gathered on the spot had not recognised me as a foreign diplomat Formerly he had been a butler at the Russian Embassy, and of course had seen me there. It is to his intervention that I owed my liberty, which without him would probably have been difficult to obtain. He further gave me an escort, to whom he gave orders to take me safely back to my own house, which, however, they did not do, much to my joy; they left me in the Rue Lafayette, where probably they thought it was not safe for them to venture, owing to their torn and dirty clothes and the loaded rifles which they carried. I

made my way on to the boulevards and met at once some friends, to whom I expressed my apprehensions that the revolutionary movement which had broken out would prove much more serious than those of a like nature that had taken place on the 31st of October and the 22nd of January preceding. We were still talking when we were joined by General d'Abzac, one of the aides-de-camp of Marshal MacMahon, of whom I shall have more to say by and by. He told us that M. Thiers had either left or was leaving for Versailles, where it was intended to remove the seat of government.

No one understood why this decision had been taken, and especially taken with such haste. I was afterwards assured, by a person who was in a position to be well informed, that one of the reasons which had induced M. Thiers' precipitancy was that he believed he would with greater facility be able to disarm the population of Paris if he could excuse this measure by the dread of a revolution breaking out, if it were not resorted to at once.

Nevertheless the revolution did break out, and for once the government found itself utterly unable to crush it. There was no army, and, what was worse, there were no leaders. The troops taken captive at Sedan and at Metz were only just returning, and it was to be dreaded that, very justly infuriated against their former generals and commanders, they would not feel disposed to listen to them or to follow them, especially if they were ordered to fight against their fellow men, and this, furthermore, in presence almost of the enemy who had not yet left Versailles or its neighbourhood.

I left Paris at the end of March, indeed I was one of the last of the diplomatic corps to go away. I went to Versailles, as everybody else did, and happened to be present at the first review held by MacMahon of the troops that had

just returned from their German captivity. This review had been rather dreaded, because it was uncertain how the soldiers would receive the unfortunate chief, to whose military mistakes they owed their misfortunes. Nevertheless the ceremony went off comparatively well, though the troops preserved an absolute silence and did not greet their former commander either with enthusiasm or with disapproval. Afterwards I had occasion to ask an officer how it was that this review had taken place without the slightest manifestation of any kind. He replied to me that the soldiers did not want to give way to their feelings in presence, as it were, of the enemy, and that it had been very wise to hold this first meeting between them and MacMahon under circumstances that excluded the possibility of any attempt to make him aware of the angry feelings which were entertained in regard to him by the troops whom he had led to defeat and to a shameful surrender.

During the two months which I spent in Versailles, until the end of the Commune, I found many opportunities of talking with leading French politicians gathered there, as to the future prospects of the country. They were unanimous in maintaining that the Republic would not be able to hold out very long, and that a monarchical restoration was imminent. Some went even so far as to believe that the Empire still had many partisans, and that, provided Napoleon III. himself consented to give up his rights and pretensions to his son, the Bonapartes might still reascend the throne. They had kept their popularity among the working classes, who undoubtedly had reaped great advantages from the solicitude concerning their welfare which the Emperor had exercised on their behalf ever since he became the Head of the State. Whatever may be said now, the idea of a Republic becoming permanent was not then congenial to the mass of

the nation, who felt more in unison with a Sovereign, no matter who that Sovereign might be. The only one who saw clearly the future was M. Thiers, who, in one of his conversations with an intimate friend, forgot himself so far as to say that "The Republic has long years of life before it this time." He did not add that he thought so because he was himself at its head.

I do not think that any nightmare can be more awful than the last four days which preceded the entry of the troops of Versailles into Paris. I will only mention briefly the assassination of the Archbishop, Monsignor Darboy, together with other victims, and the desperate resistance which was offered on the heights of Père-la-Chaise to the army of M. Thiers by the remaining Communards, who had fled there for safety, the interior of Paris no longer offering asylum to them. All these things are matters of history, but, to the stranger who had seen the capital in all its glory during the last years of the Empire, it seemed that the effect of the cataclysm which had taken place would never be erased, nor the gay city ever recover the appearance of peace and prosperity it had enjoyed before the horrors of the Commune had occurred. There was something too sinister for words in the sight of the ruins which greeted the troops of Versailles when at last they occupied the town. The sight of the destroyed Tuileries and the burned streets, which testified to the horrors which they had witnessed, appeared as things almost too terrible to be true.

But, even in those days of terror, the indifference of the French people to everything that did not personally concern them, could not fail to strike one. As soon as order was more or less restored, life began as usual, and the only lamentations which one heard were directed towards individual misfortunes and losses, rather than towards the misfortunes of the nation,

the prestige which had been destroyed, and the humiliations that had been endured. Having one day the opportunity of discussing with a tradesman in my neighbourhood the sad and terrible events which had occurred, I asked him whether the change of government had affected commerce and industry, and I was very much surprised to hear him reply that it had not, because the Germans had spent so much money that one had not been able to perceive any difference. When I expressed my wonder that France had accepted their money with the satisfaction which he seemed to feel, he simply remarked that " C'est bien égal à qui nous vendons nos pommes de terre ; l'important c'est de les vendre, et nous en avons vendu bien plus pendant l'année qui vient de s'écouler que nous ne l'avions jamais fait auparavant " (" It is quite indifferent to whom we sell our potatoes ; the only important thing is to sell them, and we have sold ever so many more during the last year than we had ever done before ").

In fact, satisfaction at the profits which private people had derived from German occupation had quite taken the upper hand of the sorrow the nation felt at the misfortunes that had fallen upon her.

This statement of mine will probably be questioned far and wide, but I shall always maintain it, in spite of any denials it may meet with. Patriotism with Frenchmen is mostly a question of words; it rarely goes beyond phrases, full of enthusiasm but devoid of real meaning. The country is essentially egoistical, and it is perhaps for that very reason that it has not only survived its disasters, but has emerged from them far more prosperous, in the material sense of the word only, than before the Germans overran the fair land of France.

One of the painful sights, in the days which followed imme-

diately upon the occupation of Paris by the troops of Versailles, was the ferocious way in which the members of the Commune were hunted and executed. Awful scenes, in which private vengeances played a part perhaps even more important than public reasons, were enacted. The work of repression was a terrible one in the worst sense of the word, and the wanton cruelty which accompanied it will ever remain a dark page in the career of M. Thiers and of the members of his government. It is to be questioned whether it was indispensable, or even necessary, to exercise such utterly ruthless cruelty. The only explanation that can be given for such ferocious tyranny is that people in authority grew frightened and thought that, in order to hide their fear from the public, extreme severity was best, as it would at least have the advantage of instilling dread into the hearts of those who otherwise might have felt tempted to follow the example of Rossel, Raoul Rigault, and others.

When all was over and order restored, M. Thiers, who was still residing at Versailles, came to Paris for a few hours, just to see for himself the damage which his house in the Rue St. Georges had suffered, and to pay a brief visit to the Elysée, which he had left with such alacrity on the 18th of March, as soon as he had heard of the incidents that had taken place at Montmartre. The reason for this hurried appearance at the palace was, so he said, to see whether some important papers he had locked up in a safe, in his study there, had not been seized by the members of the Commune. As luck would have it, no one had discovered them, and the First President of the Third Republic was able to regain possession of his property.

A friend of his, to whom he mentioned the incident, asked him of what nature were those papers about which he had been so anxious during the whole of the two months the

Commune had lasted. M. Thiers smiled, and replied simply: "They were not of any particular importance, but that was just the reason why I was afraid that the Commune should get hold of them. I had told everybody that they were of a most compromising nature for some of the people actually in power, and for the pretenders to the crown of this country. Imagine how compromised *I* would have been had it been found out that they were merely tradesmen's bills!"

## CHAPTER IX

### M. Thiers

I had had many opportunities of meeting M. Thiers during the last years of the Empire. I had known him even before I came to Paris in an official capacity, had often seen him at the houses of some mutual friends, and we came to know each other very well. He was one of the cleverest, nicest little men in the world, and even among the many interesting people who abounded in France at that time, he stood out conspicuously as one of the pleasantest. He had many enemies, which is not to be wondered at if one takes into consideration the vivacity which he always displayed in his likes and dislikes, and the bitterness, or rather the caustic tendencies, of his tongue. But friends and foes alike were loud in their praise of his intelligence, and especially of his wit. I am not talking of his moral character, which was discussed in many ways and which in part justified the attacks that were levelled against it. The Legitimists could not forgive him the part he had taken in the arrest of the Duchesse de Berry, nor the attitude of the ministry of which he was a member with regard to that unfortunate Princess whose frailties were so mercilessly displayed before the public before the end of her captivity in the fortress of Blaye. The Orleanists also did not care for him, in spite of the pledge which he had given to their party; but Louis Philippe personally was fond of him, perhaps because their tastes were very much alike, and because the sternness and austerity of Guizot,

his great opponent, had never appealed to the heart of the King, who stood rather in awe of that imposing figure in modern French political life. The bonhomie of Thiers, his easy-going manners, were more in accordance with the homely attitude which at that time distinguished the Orleans family circle. As Montalembert once said very wittily: "Thiers, c'est le ministre bourgeois d'une dynastie bourgeoise."

And the remark contained a great deal of truth, though it is much to be doubted whether the brilliant Catholic leader appreciated at their real worth the sterling qualities which M. Thiers was hiding under the sometimes frivolous manner in which he treated serious subjects.

As a writer he was one of the greatest of his epoch, and his work on the Consulate and the First Empire will always rank among the classics. Few people have understood so well as he did the gigantic figure of the first Napoleon, and certainly his knowledge of history, the wonderful way in which he remembered its lessons, and knew how to apply them where it became necessary, constituted a unique thing even in France, where at that time there was a superabundance of clever writers and great thinkers, of whom he was one of the foremost.

Some enemies of M. Thiers assured me that he would have done better to confine himself to his historical studies, and that it was a mistake on his part to throw himself into the struggles of a political career. I do not share this opinion personally, because the very nature of Thiers would have protested against a life spent only in thinking without the emulation of doing. He was essentially a great patriot, far greater than the general public supposed, and if he had personal ambitions, which cannot be denied, it must also be admitted that in the great moments of crisis through which his country passed during his lifetime, he never hesitated

to put all his strength, all his experience, and all his knowledge of public affairs, as well as his influence at home and abroad, at her service, sparing neither time nor trouble, nor energy, in his endeavours to help her.

During the whole reign of Louis Philippe, M. Thiers was a conspicuous figure in Paris society, and, strange to relate, this petit bourgeois had succeeded in entering the most exclusive circles of the Faubourg St. Germain, and contrived to install himself in the favours of its leaders, masculine as well as feminine. He was essentially the type of a middle-class man, in spite of the high offices which he had held, and never could rid himself of the habit of tying a napkin round his neck at meals, when he was in his family circle, neither would he go out without the umbrella that remained the distinctive sign of that epoch still known as the "époque de Louis Philippe," where the bourgeoisie reigned supreme, and where the Sovereign tried by all means to win for himself the sympathies of the mob by coming down to its level.

M. Thiers did not care for the mob. He was of an autocratic character, and of an imperious disposition, admitting no sovereignty apart from his own. But, nevertheless, he remained the child of his generation and of his class. He rose, but neither by adapting himself to circumstances, nor to the conditions of existence around him. Original he was in mind, in intelligence and in manners, and he did not change; he always appeared to his friends as a man of happy disposition tempered with affability, and tinged with familiarity; his distinctive characteristic from the very first days he entered public life.

Thiers was essentially "un homme d'opposition," as one of his enemies once remarked, but he was a statesman of a type such as is no longer found nowadays; an active, busy, little individual, always on the look out for his adver-

saries' mistakes, and terrible in the merciless way in which he noticed them—and, what is worse, made others notice them. He had but little pity in his heart for the errors of mankind, but was wise enough not to show the disdain in which he held it. He had been at a good school, had frequented the salon of Talleyrand, and studied politics by contact with the politicians who had ranked among the foremost in Europe. He used to relate a funny little anecdote from his early days, when he had been introduced to Prince Metternich, during one of his journeys to Vienna, whither he had repaired to study certain episodes of the history of Napoleon, and examine certain documents deposited in the Imperial Archives of the Burg. The statesman to whose intrigues the great Emperor had in part been indebted for his fall received Thiers in his study, and it seems received him very badly. But the little Frenchman, far from appearing to notice it, began at once to talk with the Austrian Chancellor as if he had known him for years, and did not scruple to question him on the subjects about which he desired to learn, a thing which Metternich, who liked above all things to hear himself speak, particularly disliked. Surprised at first, then slightly bored, the Prince told Thiers that he had better question the Director of the Archives about the various points he desired to clear up, to which the historian of the Consulate and the Empire replied quite brusquely that this personage could not tell him anything worth listening to, and that he never took lessons in history from those who had only read it. Metternich, more and more astonished, asked him what he meant. "Oh, nothing very important," was the answer; "seulement je crois que personne ne pourrait mieux me renseigner sur Napoleon que vous qui êtes parvenu à le tromper si complètement et si souvent" ("I merely think no one should be better able to give me information about Napoleon than yourself, who succeeded in

deceiving him so completely and so frequently"). When Thiers told this anecdote he never failed to add that "Metternich ne trouva rien d'autre à me répondre que de sourire avec la remarque: 'Vous connaissez bien votre histoire, jeune homme'" ("Metternich in reply could do nothing but smile, accompanying it with the remark: 'You are well up in your history, young man'").

Impudence, as one can see from the above, was not wanting in the character of the future President of the French Republic, and this impudence never deserted him in later years. It has been said that his vanity was intense, and that there was some truth in this accusation cannot be denied; but beneath this vanity there lay the latent consciousness the man had of his own moral and intellectual worth, and of the immense distance that existed between him and the other men of his generation. He tried to impose his ideas on others; he was despotic in his decisions, his judgments and his opinions, but he was not devoid of impartiality, and he was very well aware of his own faults. He loved France with a sincere affection, which saw through her faults, and there was no chauvinism in his feelings. He would have liked to see his fatherland prosperous and powerful, but he never rushed into extremes as Frenchmen are so often inclined. Whilst he was the responsible minister of the dynasty of July, he served it faithfully and to the best of his ability, and though he has been often accused of opportunism, yet he never would accept office under the Bonapartes, though, and this is rather curious, he always was of opinion that their dynasty was the most popular one among all those that aspired to the government of France.

When, together with the other members of the Legislative Chamber, he was imprisoned by the President on the day of the *coup d'état* of the 2nd of December, he is said to have

made the following typical remark: "Le Président nous fait enfermer, c'est son droit; espérons pour lui, qu'il saura en profiter, et ne donnera pas dans le travers de vouloir gouverner constitutionnellement. Il ne peut pas avoir de Constitution pour les Bonaparte, tout au plus peuvent ils prétendre à ce que leur règne soit celui où on parle de Constitution comme les malades parlent des mêts que leurs médecins leur interdisent de manger" ("The President is having us shut up, it is his right; let us hope for his own sake that he will know how to profit by it, and will not make the mistake of wanting to govern constitutionally. There can be no constitutional government for the Bonapartes. The utmost they can lay claim to is that during their reign the Constitution should be spoken of in the tone in which invalids speak of dishes that their doctors forbid them to eat").

During the eighteen years that the Empire lasted, Thiers always refused to take office, though he owned later on that he felt once or twice sorely tempted to do so. But he realised that the regime could not last, and reserved himself for the moment when it would be overturned, feeling convinced in his mind that that day would be also that of his own personal triumph, and that whether the country liked it or not it would be compelled to turn to him for advice and for help.

When after the first defeats which characterised the war of 1870, the Empress Eugénie felt inclined to appeal to him to help her, and had him sounded by one of her friends who was on terms of close intimacy with him, M. Thiers replied that it was either too late or too early for him to do anything, and that as matters stood, the best thing to do was to allow events to take their course. "But the dynasty," said his visitor; "are you going to allow the dynasty to fall like that?"

"If the dynasty were wise, I certainly would do my best

to support it," was the unexpected reply; "but the dynasty will not be wise; it will never have the common sense to bring itself to conclude peace just now, and to enforce the conditions of that peace, even by measures of violence against those who would undoubtedly oppose it. If I thought the Regent was strong enough and firm enough to arrest half the members of the Corps Législatif, and to send the other half back to their own firesides to meditate on the wisdom of a useless opposition, if she would make up her mind to govern for a time without the Chambers, then I would at once accept office; but she will never have the courage to take such a responsibility before the country, and therefore I cannot do anything for her. There are moments in the life of nations when it is indispensable for their welfare that those who govern them should feel no hesitation in resorting to violence, and France just now has reached such a moment. It is a thousand pities that the Regent or the Emperor fails to see it is the case. Under such circumstances my help would be useless to them, and it might compromise my own future prospects."

This conversation gives a very good insight into the character of M. Thiers. It also accounts in part for the ruthlessness which he displayed in the crushing of the Commune a few months later.

Apropos of this, a few weeks before his death, I had the opportunity of talking to him about it at St. Germain, whither he had repaired to spend the summer, and where he was preparing himself for the struggle of the coming elections, which he fondly hoped would prove fatal to the government of Marshal MacMahon, whom he still expected to replace as head of the State. Thiers was in a communicative mood that afternoon, and he spoke with great vivacity of that time when he had displayed such energy, as his friends said

—such brutality, as his foes maintained—in fighting the unruly and disorderly elements that had so very nearly destroyed France. On that occasion he used these memorable words: "I know that I have been severely blamed for the orders which I had given to Galiffet, to show no mercy to the insurgents, but, frankly, what else could I do? We had just gone through an unfortunate war; the enemy was at our gates, we had to execute a most onerous treaty, and above all to clear our territory from the invader, who certainly would never have left it, had he thought that this rebellion was going to take the upper hand. We had the whole country to reorganise, and this under the most deplorable conditions that have ever existed in the life of a nation. We were without an army, without any regular government, and had to fight the many ambitions of those who thought to seek their own advantage out of the general ruin. The first thing to do was to strike fear into the hearts of those who already thought that they could bring their own party to the head of affairs and thus add something to the general confusion. Don't forget that in order to oblige the Prussians to recognise that we were strong enough to rule France, and to rule it well, we had not only to assert ourselves, but also to drive out of the minds of all our opponents, and of these there were legions, the idea that we had not got power enough on our side.

"You tell me that the Commune might easily have been subdued on that eventful and fatal 18th of March. This perhaps is true, because it did not even exist at that time, and we were face to face with a simple insurrection, not with a revolution. But would it have been wise? I don't think so. Had we not acted as if we were in presence of a real and earnest danger, had I not retired to Versailles in a hurry as I did, the mutiny of the 18th of March would have repeated itself a few months later, and this sort of thing

would have gone on continually. The government would have been weakened quite uselessly, and the prestige of France fallen a little lower than was the case already. A revolution is an incident, perhaps sad and bloody, but an incident all the same; whereas continual rebellions mean the demoralisation of a nation.

"I knew that France was demoralised in the sense I mean, but why need the world come to the same conclusion? Surely, none at all. Therefore we had to show the world that we were a strong government, that, what is even more important, we *were* a government, a fact which many people doubted still; and that as such we were determined to enforce order, to enforce it in the most determined manner possible, even at the risk of spilling more blood than we would have cared to do at other times. Of course I could not foresee the excesses to which the Commune would resort, nor the murder of the hostages, or the destroying of half Paris by fire, but I will be frank with you, I much preferred this to the consequences which would have ensued for the future of France, in an unsettled state of things such as would have resulted had the government of which I was the head not had occasion to show its energy and its decision to make itself respected. Of course, when Bismarck saw that we could cope with the situation, that we did not require his, or anyone else's help, he gave up all idea of making difficulties in the execution of the different clauses of the treaty of peace. The army also, having just returned from its captivity in Germany, required something to divert it from the many anxious and rebellious thoughts it had had time to indulge in, during the long months of its imprisonment in German fortresses. The Commune came opportunely to allow it to let its thoughts drift into another channel.

"To resume the main point, I do not think that

more indulgence towards the rebels would have helped us to regain the position to which even as a defeated nation we were entitled. For these reasons I do not regret that I enjoined severity to the troops that entered Paris. This severity had the result that out of the moral ruins left by the Empire, and those material ruins which resulted from the fleeting victory of the Commune, rose a government which won for itself the respect of Europe, and the esteem of Germany, who, seeing what it was capable of, gave up every thought of putting difficulties in its way. No, when I remember all that happened at that time, I cannot say I am sorry for anything I did, or which was done under my responsibility. I may deplore it, but I cannot regret it. One cannot be sentimental in politics."

I wrote down this conversation in my diary when I got home, and every time I have the occasion to read it over again, I remember the vivacity with which Thiers developed to me his ideas on this important subject, ideas which I believe have never before been made known to the public.

It is strange how, with all his penetration, and his wonderful insight into politics, Thiers did not foresee the circumstances that brought about his own downfall. There were lacunes in that remarkable mind, lacunes which proceeded from his inordinate vanity. For instance, when he had started on that journey across Europe, in order to implore her help during the Franco-German war, he never for one moment imagined that he would be unsuccessful, or that his entreaties would be repulsed. The indifference with which the fate of his country was viewed beyond its frontiers proved a terrible blow to the old man, who sadly said, or, rather, repeated, the famous words: " Il n'y a plus d'Europe," when his last hope, his trust in Alexander II. of Russia, also proved elusive. But with his usual ability he managed to mask his defeat under

the pretext that neither Italy, Austria, nor Russia would have anything to do with the Imperial regime, and that as they hadn't been sure it was definitely to be classed among the past things of history, they had thought it best and wisest to remain neutral, and not to interfere with the course of events. Out of that circumstance Thiers made enough capital to ensure his own election as head of the government, and once established at Versailles in that capacity he felt sure that he would remain at his post until his death.

He had no real adversaries worthy of that name. With consummate skill he had succeeded in entirely discrediting the Orleans princes by the willingness with which he had helped them to get back their confiscated millions, and he knew that henceforward they had made themselves impossible. There was still the Comte de Chambord, but in his case Thiers had at his disposal sources of information that left him no doubt as to the attitude that the latter would eventually take, if offered the crown of his ancestors. The only adversaries he dreaded were, therefore, the Bonapartes; and this danger seemed, for the present, to have drifted away by the death of Napoleon III. and the extreme youth of his son.

Whether it was this last circumstance, or simply that his watchfulness had relaxed, the fact remains that Thiers never noticed the storm that was looming in the distance, and threatening him. And when an accidental circumstance brought about his fall, in quite an unexpected manner, he was more astonished than anyone else at the event.

Nevertheless, he took it quite good humouredly, and with far more philosophy than could have been expected from him. I saw him a few days after it had occurred and was struck with his indifference. I think that upon the whole he was glad that his fall had taken place for a neutral cause, and that it had been his person that had been objected to

rather than his manner of conducting the government. He hoped that the future would avenge him, and though such an old man, yet he was making plans for the day when France would call him back to the head of affairs. He knew that no matter what his enemies might say, he had deserved and had earned the gratitude of his country, and won for himself a glorious page in its annals. And if the truth be told, he was rather glad to be once more in the ranks of the opposition, and thus able to live over again the past days, when a word of his could overturn a government. He devoted all his energies to the struggle which he fully intended to initiate against President MacMahon, whom he had never liked, even when he had employed him, and whom he never forgave for having taken his place. Thiers had always been of opinion that the Marshal's intellectual capacities were of the smallest kind, and that except honesty of purpose, he possessed none of the qualifications that are required of the Head of a State. It was gall and wormwood to him, to find his place had been taken by a man who would destroy some of his work, and a great deal of his plans. So he devoted all his energies to prepare the defeat of the Marshal after the latter's *coup d'état* of the 16th of May.

Fate, however, interfered and carried off M. Thiers after an illness of a few hours at St. Germain, where, as I have already related, he spent the last summer of his life. In spite of his advanced age, he died in full possession of his faculties, and with his intelligence as bright and clear as it had ever been. The emotion provoked by his death was considerable. The old man was, after all, more popular than one had thought, and the nation was very well aware that in burying him, she was also burying a great patriot, who had been true to her in the hour of her greatest adversity. I followed in his funeral procession, and as we were marching

towards distant Père la Chaise, I heard the following remark which left a deep impression on my mind: the more so that it was uttered by a common workman whom certainly I wouldn't have believed to be capable of it: "Il avait des défauts, le petit homme, mais après tout c'est grâce à lui que Belfort est resté français!" ("He had his faults, the little man; but, after all, it is thanks to him that Belfort remained French").

I think that Thiers would have thought, had he listened to these words, that they constituted the best recognition that had ever been uttered of his long life of service to the nation.

## CHAPTER X

### The Comte de Chambord and his Party

I had had the honour to be introduced to the Comte de Chambord in Vienna, long before the fall of the Empire had once more put him forward as a Pretender to the throne of France; I had even once or twice been invited to Frohsdorf. These visits always left me a sadder if not a wiser man. They were more like a pilgrimage to an historical monument, than a visit to a living man. Everything seemed dead in that small, unpretentious house, for it could hardly be called a castle, in which the last direct descendant of Louis XIV. was ending his uneventful existence. The walls themselves told you of something that was past and gone, and the inhabitants of this living grave flitted like ghosts of the great traditions that were embodied in them. Everything was dignified, solemn, and hushed. The rooms were small, but full of great things and mementoes, from the large equestrian portrait of Henri IV., to the stately picture of Louis XVI., and the smiling one of unfortunate Marie Antoinette. Lackeys in the blue livery of the House of France, met you at the door, and ushered you into an unpretentious study, where, sitting at a table littered with books and papers, the Comte de Chambord was awaiting his visitors.

He was a most charming man, with grand manners, and much stateliness, but one on whom the many deceptions of his life had left their impress, and aged before his time. He always questioned all those whom he was about

France, Paris, and everything that was going on there, taking the liveliest interest in his country, but not understanding it at all, and not realising that the France of after the Revolution was no longer the France which the old Bourbon monarch had ruled. He had strong principles, earnest convictions, was in the full sense of the term a "chevalier sans peur et sans reproche," but he harboured no illusions as to his possibilities of playing any part in the political life of his country. Had he had any children it is probable that he would have tried to reconcile the traditions of his family with the requirements of modern France, but in presence of the fact that with him the elder branch of the House of Bourbon was coming to an end, he must have had the feeling, though he never owned to it in public, that there was no necessity for him to abdicate any part of the inheritance of his ancestors, in order to benefit the Orleans dynasty who had sent his great-uncle to the scaffold, and had tried to dishonour his own mother. He was too much of a gentleman not to have received with politeness the overtures of his cousins when they made up their minds to come and pay their respects to him at Frohsdorf; but he could not, and would not, affect in regard to them a cordiality which he did not really feel.

The Comte de Chambord was essentially *un homme d'autrefois;* he never shirked what he considered to be his duty, but who would never give himself the appearance of liking what he did not, or of respecting what did not deserve respect. He had grand manners that savoured of hauteur, and left one in no doubt as to what he thought or believed. Life had been one long disappointment to him, which he had accepted with a true Christian spirit, devoid of the slightest shade of rebellion, and he had picked up his burden, and carried it nobly to the end. He died wrapped in the folds of the old flag which he had refused to re-

nounce, even when a crown would have rewarded him for its abandonment.

At Frohsdorf he led the existence of a country gentleman; there was no semblance of a Pretender about him. As he once said to a visitor who very tactlessly had remarked upon it: "I am not a Pretender, and do not need give myself the appearance of one. I am a principal for those who see in me their King."

And yet there was much that was kingly in that quiet Austrian domain, to which the Duchesse d'Angoulême had retired towards the end of her earthly career, and which she had bequeathed to her nephew. The big drawing-room where one assembled in the evenings after dinner had a vague appearance of a palace, though the master of it did his best to put his visitors at their ease; but the Comtesse de Chambord sitting in her big arm-chair by a round table, upon which her needlework was laid, or bending over the stitches of her tapestry, looked every inch a sovereign, in spite of the knitted scarf which she often tied round her head, or the extreme simplicity of her black silk dress, made quite high to the throat and finished by a plain white linen collar. The atmosphere of the room, too, was laden with a hush and solemnity that at once made one feel and understand that one was not in the dwelling of a common mortal. These evenings were anything but amusing, though the Comte did his best to keep the ball of conversation rolling; but somehow it was impossible to give it a frivolous turn, or to drive away an impression that everyone in the room was waiting for something, What, of course, was not known; but one was waiting, waiting like the son of the murdered Duc de Berry had been waiting ever since his birth, for the call of his country, which never came, or at least not in the way in which he would have cared to respond to it.

# The Comte de Chambord

A great deal has been said concerning the attempt at a monarchical restoration that had taken place during the presidency of Marshal MacMahon, and the circumstances which had accompanied it have not been commented upon in a manner favourable to the Comte de Chambord. I was in Versailles at the time it occurred, and from what came to my knowledge I do not think that the real reasons which influenced Henri V., as his adherents called him, have ever been known in their entirety. One has spoken of the flag and of the reluctance of the Pretender to accept the tricolour, but what has never been revealed to this day is that a compromise had been suggested by a clever French politician who had been consulted. Gifted with a singular gift of observation, this politician was very well *au courant* of the feelings of the different parties which were represented in the National Assembly, and consequently he was in a position to give sound advice to those who had recourse to his experience.

His compromise was that the national flag should remain the tricolour, whilst the King would keep for his own personal emblem the white cravat of his ancestors, that alone would be borne before him on all State ceremonies which were not purely military ones. Strange to say, the Comte de Chambord had at first appeared willing to consent, understanding well, in spite of the prejudices of his earlier education, that he would be obliged to make some concessions to the times before he could hope to be accepted by France as its legitimate King. But, before giving his final adherence to this compromise, he wished to know the opinion of his cousin, the Comte de Paris, and to learn from him whether or not he would, when in due course he succeeded him, ratify this arrangement, and maintain its clauses. The Comte de Paris refused to assume the responsibility of saying yes, and replied evasively that his uncle the Duc d'Aumale ought to be con-

sulted. The latter, however, declared that he could not advise his nephew, but that it would be difficult in his opinion for an Orleans prince to forget that the fate of his dynasty was bound up with that of the tricolour banner, and that to renounce it even in part, was to renounce the glorious principles of the Monarchy of July. This answer, when it became known to the Comte de Chambord, did away with his last hesitation. Urged by the strong dynastic feelings that swayed him, he might have made up his mind to sacrifice some part of his principles to the welfare of his race; but only if this sacrifice would have been of some use to it. Seeing that it would only be interpreted as a desire on his part to put on his head a crown he did not care for, and which in his inmost heart he did not think he had either the strength or the ability to carry or to defend, he gave up every idea of winning it by means of a compromise where, in the best of cases, some of his own personal dignity would have foundered; and after a short stay in France, he returned to his beloved Frohsdorf, to die there a few years later, the last of the Burgraves of his generation.

I had occasion to see him during the short stay which he made at Versailles under an incognito which was only discovered by a very few. We took a walk together in the park, and along the alleys of that garden of Trianon, where the young and frivolous Queen, so brutally murdered by the bloody Revolution which she had neither foreseen nor understood, had walked together with the lovely Lamballe and her train of gay courtiers. Everything looked sad, and deserted, and abandoned; it all spoke of a dead past, and of a departed glory. Suddenly the Comte de Chambord stopped in his walk, and turning to me said those memorable words which I have never forgotten: "What a pity that this place was not entirely destroyed in 1793!"

I looked at him with surprise.

"You are astonished to hear me say such a thing," he continued, "but let me explain to you my thoughts, and you will understand me better. Royalty, like so many other things, is a prejudice, at least for the masses who have neither traditions nor principles. It represents, or at least ought to represent to them, something that is strong, powerful, entirely above them, beyond them; something sacred, that no power save that of God may touch or may destroy. Once this feeling concerning it is gone, half its prestige is gone too. The mob only respects what it can neither harm nor kill. If it once sees that royalty, like everything else, can be touched with a sacrilegious hand, that it is at the mercy of the first boy or man in the street, then the mob not only loses every fear, but also its veneration. It rejoices to see that it has got over the feeling of awe which formerly inspired it with regard to that superior thing which ruled it; it delights in pulling it down, and in treasuring the remembrance of the day on which it smashed it to the ground. Now nothing reminds one more of deeds done, whether good or bad, than the spots where such deeds were committed.

"The French people, when looking at Versailles, and walking freely through the rooms where Kings formerly reigned, can always think, speak and remember, with something of that low pride which a boxer feels when he has knocked his adversary to the ground, of the time when they destroyed the power which had ruled them, and feasted in the halls of their former masters. That remembrance is most unwholesome, and can only foster rebellious feelings in the breasts of those who treasure it. Had Versailles been destroyed the Revolution of course would not have been forgotten, but the nation would not always have had before its eyes the sight of the monument of the fallen grandeur of its Kings.

Facts are forgotten or lose their importance far quicker than one thinks; but places, and spots, keep their eloquence, and unfortunately keep it for ever."

He stopped, and looked back towards the walls of the massive old pile, whose many windows were blazing in the setting sun. And once more he sighed: "Yes, I do regret that this place has not been burned down and destroyed; it would not have witnessed then the triumph of the victorious Prussian eagle, and after that, what real French King would care to live in it, even if a King ever reigns again in France!"

He sighed yet again, and we slowly retraced our steps towards the town. As we passed the Castle gates, he stopped again: "Sic transit gloria mundi," he quoted; "my glory, like that of my ancestors, has passed away; perhaps it is for the best after all, since I was not destined to see my race continue!"

Much has been related concerning the interview which the Comte de Chambord had with Marshal MacMahon, when he asked him whether or not he would feel inclined to favour a monarchical restoration. It has been said that the old soldier, who without scruple had accepted the succession of Napoleon III., to whom he owed his title and his dignity, found that his conscience would not allow him to "betray," as he expressed himself, the Republican government, at the head of which he had been called by a parliamentary majority who had done so only in the hope that he would help it to reinstate its former Kings.

There is some truth in this reproach, because certainly MacMahon had not shown himself before, and did not show himself in the future, so very chary of offending public opinion as represented by the Legislative Assembly which was supposed to be the voice of the country. But in the *non possumus* which he opposed to the restoration of the Comte de Chambord,

*Photo: Pierre Petit, Paris.*

ADOLPHE THIERS

*Photo: Walery, Paris.*

MARSHAL MACMAHON

*Photo: Pierre Petit, Paris.*

COMTE DE CHAMBORD

*Photo: Carjat, Paris.*

LEON GAMBETTA

there was something else than the desire to remain himself at the head of the State. There was a tacit pledge which he had given to the Orleans dynasty to support its pretensions, and also the feeling that he did not enjoy sufficient popularity among the army to enforce a change of government, and to bring back a dynasty which had been driven out of the country by its own faults. MacMahon was not clever, not far-seeing, but he knew very well what the troops thought of him, and also that at that moment the disaster of Sedan was not sufficiently forgotten for him to risk being punished for it under another pretext, which his lending his hand to an attempt at a monarchical restoration would have furnished.

The Comte de Chambord returned to Frohsdorf a sadder though not a wiser man. He was not fortunate in his advisers; the leaders of the Legitimist party did not understand either the feelings of France nor the strength which they undoubtedly wielded at that particular moment. Instead of doing their best to effect a reconciliation between the different opinions that divided the country, they tried, on the contrary, to exasperate them, and prevented their own triumph by the insolence with which they proclaimed everywhere that its hour had struck. France, at that time, was like a man recovering from a severe illness, whose whole body is sore, and who wants to be handled with the greatest gentleness. The Legitimists ignored this condition, and loudly boasted that the time had come when all past grievances would be avenged, and when they should be allowed to rule according to their own prejudices, bringing back to power with them all the old traditions against which the saner elements in the land had risen in revolt eighty-five years before. They wanted to make a clean slate, and wash out the remembrance of everything that had taken place since Louis XVI. had been murdered

on the scaffold. The feeling might have been a natural one; the utterance of it was stupid in the extreme.

Many have wondered at the want of initiative shown by Henri V., as he was called by his partisans. I, who have known him well, saw nothing extraordinary in this. As I have already hinted, he was quite willing to be carried to the throne, but he had no desire to occupy it, and still less to step upon it bound by promises and pledges, which would have interfered with his liberty of action, a thing of which he had always been extremely jealous. He had in him all the authority of the Kings his forefathers, and would no more have submitted to the advice of his courtiers than he would have sacrificed his principles to win back his lost inheritance. He wanted, above all things, to keep his *libre arbitre*, and this explains the apparent apathy with which he witnessed the overthrow of what had been the hopes of his followers rather than his own.

Two years later I called upon the Comte de Chambord at Frohsdorf, during an absence of the Comtesse, in whose presence it was always more or less difficult to discuss political questions, and we talked over those days. Every hope of a monarchical restoration had faded then, and the Republic was more or less an accomplished fact. He seemed to take it as a natural consequence of all the mistakes committed by the different governments that had ruled in France, and if the truth be told, I think he preferred its having overcome all opposition, to the possibility of its being superseded either by the Bonaparte, or the Orleans dynasty, which he recognised, but could not accept as the successor of his own rights. The grand seigneur that he was could not adjust himself to this hankering after a " popularité de bas aloi," as he described it, which had ever distinguished the younger branch of the house of Bourbon since the days of Philippe Egalité. He

refused to profess the theory that it did not matter with whom one shook hands, provided one washed one's own afterwards. On the contrary, he was of opinion that certain contacts can never be got rid of, no matter how much soap and water one uses to efface them. It was partly on account of that feeling that he did not regret circumstances had interfered with the monarchical restoration, for which so many people had hoped, and he made me understand what he thought of it by saying, among other things, that: "A royalty that has once come down into the street is no longer royalty such as it was understood in the days of old, when the principle of the 'droit Divin' was the foremost among those one had been taught to respect and to worship. We Bourbons of the old stock cannot bow before the popularity of the mob, and try to make it accept our own. We can work for the people, act in unison with the nation in all grave questions where its welfare is in question; we cannot accept its sovereign right to dictate to us its laws. I know that my ideas are out of fashion, 'que je suis démodé,' but whom do I hurt by clinging to my old traditions, to the ancient glories of my house, which have also been those of France, it must not be forgotten? If I had had children, I might have acted differently; I might, or I might not; and perhaps God has done well in refusing them to me, as they would have been the source of much conflict in my mind. As it is I shall die solitary and alone, and with me shall die the Bourbons of Louis XIV., those who have learnt nothing, and forgotten nothing, as our enemies aver."

He said the last words smilingly and jestingly, and I could not help smiling, too, though I well knew the latent sadness that was hiding under his apparent mirth. He was still a handsome man at that time, though far too stout, and his lameness, although not interfering with the dignity of his

manners, still took away from what otherwise would have been an imposing figure. But the eyes had a wonderfully kind expression, the noble, intelligent forehead revealed a grand nature and a beautiful soul. One could not have passed him in the street without being struck by his appearance, and without noticing him, so completely "grand seigneur" was he, even in his most trivial gestures. Everyone who knew him liked him, respected him, bowed down before the purity of his life, and the earnest, simple manner in which he performed all his duties, even the most trifling ones. He was one of those characters one meets with but seldom, and which reconcile one with humanity.

I never saw him again alive after that conversation, and only looked upon him once more when he lay on his bier, having hurried to Frohsdorf to attend his funeral. The face had an expression of great calm, and bore but few traces of the sufferings he had endured in his last illness. Bunches of roses were scattered on the linen sheet, that covered him up to his chin, and over his feet was draped the white flag that his ancestors had carried to victory; that flag over which he had watched all his life, and which was to be buried with him in the little chapel of Goritz near the Adriatic Sea, far away from that France he had loved so well, from those vaults of St. Denis, whence his race had been excluded for ever.

## CHAPTER XI

### The Orleans Princes

It must be owned that the Orleans Princes, at the time of which I am speaking, had far more adherents than the Comte de Chambord.

Whilst the latter kept aloof from the world in his haughty attitude, his cousins sought popularity by all means in their power, and wherever they could hope to find it. They had in their favour, first their number, the beauty of their women, their incontestable bravery, their unwearying energy, and their courting of the mob. Against them was their excessive avarice, and the eagerness with which they had hastened, as soon as the doors of their fatherland were opened to them once more, to claim their confiscated millions without allowing their thoughts to dwell for one moment on the sad state in which their country was finding itself, nor on the tremendous sacrifices it was voluntarily making in order to pay the enormous war contribution exacted by Germany, in accordance with the Treaty of Frankfurt. In the claim they had put forward they had been encouraged by M. Thiers, who, shrewd politician that he was, wanted to make them unpopular as pretenders, and to minimise the influence they might otherwise have acquired. The fact was that this hasty step, which would have passed unnoticed had they attempted it later on, made them lose considerable ground among people who would otherwise have looked up to them, because the idea of a Republic had not yet become familiar to the public mind, and because the

Orleans dynasty was essentially a democratic and middle-class one, whose instincts did not clash with those of the governing and intellectual classes of France after the war that had driven the Bonapartes out of the country. The reign of Louis Philippe had not left bad memories; many even regretted it. The King as well as his family had known how to appeal to the mob, and France had reached an epoch in her history, where the mob held the first place and had to be reckoned with. The King's sons had frequented public colleges, associated with other young men of their age, and thus had given satisfaction to the snobbish leanings which are perhaps more developed in Frenchmen than in any other nation, in spite of all their outcries for equality and the abolition of all the privileges enjoyed in former times by the upper classes.

The Duc d'Aumale had even made himself popular, with a low kind of popularity of which he never succeeded in getting rid during the whole course of his life; but still he was popular in his way. I shall talk of him later on, as he deserves a chapter to himself, and Chantilly, too, is worthy of a description not embodied in a few words. He was always considered to be the clever man of his family, and was the most respected by his numerous nephews and nieces, partly on account of his large fortune, the inheritance of the Princess de Condé, and bequeathed to him by the last of that name and race. He had become the master of the old home of the Condés, made illustrious by the Connétable de Montmorency, and the brave warrior known to his contemporaries by the name of Monsieur le Prince, and to history under that of the Great Condé. There was much of chivalry in the nature of the Duc d'Aumale, more so, perhaps, than in the character of his brothers, who were less princely in their manners and ways.

# The Orleans Princes

The head of this historic family, the Comte de Paris can be described in very few words: he was essentially an honest man, but devoid of initiative; timid in the manifestation of his opinions; an excellent soldier, as he proved himself to be during the American war in which he took part as a volunteer, but a mediocre officer—one born to obedience but not reared to command; weak in character, but firm in his convictions; an excellent father, a devoted husband, a dutiful son; a perfect King had he ever become one, so long as his country was prosperous, but an incapable one had it found itself in difficulties; a man always careful to fulfil his duties, but certainly not one who inspired love for those duties outside his own immediate family circle. He did not possess any of the qualities of a Pretender, except domestic virtues, which no one asked of him, and which even his best friends did not require. Though he was head of his house, he never could divest himself of an excess of deference to the advice of his uncles, and could rarely muster enough courage to speak or to act independently of them.

The only time he allowed himself to indulge in politics was at the period of the famous Boulangist agitation, when he made the rather naïve remark that he had been induced to take part in that intrigue because a great Christian like the Count de Mun, and a great lady like the Duchesse d'Uzès, were attracted to it. This attempt to restore the throne of Louis Philippe by the help of an adventurer with a white feather in his cap had, as is known, ended in a ridicule that had considerably shaken the personal position of the Comte de Paris, already made insecure through his own and his partisans' many mistakes. The Comte had essentially a reasoning mind, but was always filled with abstract ideas; he could never put things on a practical ground. He had few illusions but a false look out, as well as a wrong point

of view. Instead of adopting one of two lines of conduct which would have been equally dignified—submission to the Comte de Chambord, or brave adherence to the principles of his ancestors and those of that dynasty of July, "la monarchie de juillet," as it was still called in France—he had taken a middle course, that of recognising the personality but not the rights of his cousin. This made him bow down before the universal suffrage that had proclaimed the Republic in the kingdom of which he would in any case have been the lawful heir. He thought that by his attitude of absolute submission to the wishes of the nation he would have inspired it with the desire to call him to its head. A false reasoning if ever there was one, that was to cause him to take many erratic and undignified steps, and which at last exiled him anew; an exile in which he remained until his death.

The only time that the Comte de Paris ventured openly upon a step which could be construed as a manifestation of his pretensions to the throne of France was on the occasion of the wedding of his eldest daughter, Queen Amélie of Portugal, when he gave in his Paris residence, the Hotel Galliera, a reception at which all the pomp that attended royalty in former days was displayed. It was as ill-timed as useless, and was the pretext for his expulsion from his country, an expulsion that had been asked for a long time since by the Republican leaders, who did not care for the nation to become used to the continued presence of the descendants of its former Kings. He did not attempt to resist, though it is said that some of his partisans begged him to allow them to make a manifestation in his favour; he embarked for British shores with a resignation that would have been admirable in a private person, but which was very near akin to cowardice in the representative of the Divine rights of Kings, those rights that Henri IV. knew how

to impose, even on such great lords as the members of that powerful house of Lorraine, who also, at one time, aspired to the throne that belonged to him, and which he conquered at the point of his sword.

Philippe VII. was of a more pacific disposition than his illustrious ancestor. He bade good-bye to his lovely castle of Eu, and settled at Stowe House, the old residence of the Dukes of Buckingham, where he ended his life, after cruel sufferings, borne with the patience that was the distinctive feature of his honest, straightforward, and distinctly middle-class character. With the Comte de Chambord had disappeared a principle together with a man; when the Comte de Paris expired in his turn, there died a good and virtuous person but nothing else. He represented in the world his own estimable self, but not the royalty to which he had been born.

About his son, little need be said. Gifted with a more adventurous spirit than that of his father, the Duc d'Orleans began his career by risking imprisonment in France, when he appeared there to enrol himself in the ranks of her army. He has never made the least attempt to secure a crown which does not even tempt him. He has led the life of an idle man of means, travelling about, playing at science when it suited him, ignorant of the great aims of life; a man not even to be pitied, because misfortune has never touched him; one who has never known what society, his country, and the great name he bears required of him; who has laughed at what his forefathers have always respected; who calls himself the heir to all the Bourbons that have left their impress on history, but who would be very sorry had he ever to follow in their footsteps; the Republic can well afford to ignore him, because he would be the first to be embarrassed by its fall.

The Duc d'Orleans had no children by his marriage with an Austrian Archduchess, from whom he parted very soon after they had been united. His only brother, the Duke of Montpensier, is still unmarried, and at present the grandchildren of the Duc de Chartres constitute the hope of the partisans of the Orleans dynasty.

The Duc de Chartres was the one brilliant figure among the descendants of King Louis Philippe. There was something dashing about him that appealed to the imagination of people. When the Franco-German War broke out, he at once offered his services first to the Imperial, afterwards to the Republican, government, and when they had both refused them, he succeeded in entering a regiment of volunteers, under the assumed name of Robert Le Fort, only the Comtesse de Vallon and one or two other friends being aware of his identity.

When the campaign was over he remained on active service, until the proscription that fell on his brother had also an influence upon his fate, and obliged him to retire into private life. He had been a great favourite in Parisian society; men appreciated his wit, and women his chivalrous devotion to them. It is not an indiscretion to say that his love affairs with the Princesse de Sagan were at one time a general subject of conversation. He was always a welcome guest at a dinner table, and a conspicuous figure in the hunting field, and succeeded better than any of his uncles and cousins in winning for himself the sympathies even of Republicans, who secretly feared his popularity among the army and in his own regiment.

He was a born soldier, with all the intrepidity of the fighter who never shirks a battlefield. People liked him and respected him, because with all the sterling qualities of his elder brother, the Comte de Paris, he had none of the latter's

apathy. Perhaps, if he had not been a younger son, he might have made an effort to win back the throne for his race. But reared in principles of absolute submission to the head of his house, he never criticised anything his elders did, and though I have known him intimately and well, the only time when I have heard him talk politics was one afternoon at his little country home of St. Firmin on the borders of the Forest of Chantilly, when the conversation turned on the trial of Marshal Bazaine, over which the Duc d'Aumale had presided. The Duc de Chartres happened to be in a communicative mood, and expressed the opinion that he thought it had been a mistake on the part of his uncle to have accepted the task of judging the unfortunate commander-in-chief of the army of Metz. He said that a member of the house of Bourbon ought not to have consented to appear before the public as a kind of avenger of wrongs in which politics had had so great a part. And he added these significant words: "We Orleans, more than even members of other royal houses, ought to avoid showing ourselves as arbiters of another man's fate. It is quite enough to have to carry into history the stigma that attaches to us ever since the trial of Louis XVI."

I looked up to him rather in astonishment.

"Yes," he said, "I understand what you mean, and that you are surprised to hear me talk in the way I do, but you must not think that I have not often given a thought to that fatal act of my ancestor, when he helped an ungrateful nation to murder its legitimate King. You see, I belong to another generation than the one which saw all those horrors, and I cannot consider them without deep regret and shame. I can understand a good many things—cruelty, ambition, ingratitude, wickedness even—I cannot admit crimes against nature, and the vote of the Duc d'Orleans belonged to that

kind of crime. Beside it, the so-called—because I cannot look at it in that light since it was the result of the free choice of a great nation—the so-called usurpation of my grandfather was a small matter. It only offended and sinned against a principle, it did not offend the natural feelings that ought always to be sacred to every man, no matter what position he holds in life. And when I reflect on the trial of Marshal Bazaine, I cannot help thinking that my uncle would have been better advised if he had kept aloof, and left to others the task of asking from that victim of his ambition or of circumstances—which it was, it is not for me to say—an account of his actions and an explanation of his deeds."

The Duc de Chartres had married his cousin, the daughter of the Prince de Joinville and of a Brazilian Princess. His wife was a very distinguished woman, who by her tact and her cleverness made herself universally liked. They had several children, and their eldest daughter, the Princess Marie, who was married to a Prince belonging to the Royal House of Denmark, played at one time rather an important part in European politics, thanks to the influence which she exercised over the mind of the Emperor Alexander III. of Russia. She died young, and the Duc did not survive her long. The Duchesse de Chartres, widowed and past middle age, now spends her time in her little home at St. Firmin, having sold the house in the Rue Jean Goujon, where she had lived with her husband, and which at one time was a centre of reunion for a certain portion of Paris society. The only members of the family of Orleans whom one can meet in the salons of the French aristocracy are the Duc and the Duchesse de Vendôme, who live at Neuilly, and go about a good deal. The Comtesse de Paris comes sometimes to the capital, but never stays there longer than for a few days, spending the rest of her time either in her palace of Villaman-

rique in Spain, or in her castle of Randan, near Vichy, where her life is entirely given up to practices of devotion and good deeds. All her daughters are married. Tragedy has broken the life of her eldest daughter, Queen Amélie of Portugal, but the Comtesse is placid by nature, possessing something of the fatalism that ruled the Comte de Paris, and that never disputes the decrees of a Providence it has learned to bless whether it sends good or evil to mankind.

The future of the Orleans family, that promised to become so important on returning to France after the fall of the Empire, proved to be quite insignificant in so far as the destiny of France was concerned. The Orleans had neither the courage nor the energy, nor especially the unselfishness, to try to win back for themselves the position which they had lost. They never had enough initiative, much less determination to brave public opinion, and eat humble pie before the Comte de Chambord. These things alone could have put them back on the height whence they had fallen. But the descendants of Louis Philippe never could make up their minds to any resolution, whether grave or frivolous. They always professed the fallacious opinion that the will of a nation ought to be respected, no matter how or in what way expressed. France was for them a master before whose decrees they never for one moment felt the temptation to rebel. They accepted those decrees so well that now no one dreams of looking upon them as pretenders to anything, be it a throne, or simply the wish to have their word considered at times when the vital interests of their country are at stake. They always talk, or rather allow their followers to talk, of their duties, of their fidelity to the principles that made their ancestors great, but in reality they have not the slightest wish to put forward their persons in order to secure to their race anything beyond the millions which they already

possess. The Comte de Paris was a dreamer; the Duc de Nemours a saint; the Duc de Chartres a soldier, never looking beyond the field of a soldier's activity; the Duc d'Orleans a man of the world; the Duc d'Aumale a scholar, immersed in his books and his artistic tastes. Among them all a man was wanted, and a King could not be found.

## CHAPTER XII

### The Duc d'Aumale and Chantilly

The Duc d'Aumale was certainly the one member of the Orleans family who made the most friends for himself, and had the greatest number of admirers. Whether this was due to his personal merits, or to the millions which he inherited from the last Prince of Condé, it is not for me to say. He had plenty to give to others; it is but natural that these others praised him in the hope he would give them a little more than he had intended. He courted popularity, made sacrifices of pride, principles, and sometimes personal affections, in order to win it; and he succeeded in a certain sense, at least from the point of view of those who measure praise and blame according to the social standing of the person to whom they deal it. He was more learned than clever, more clever than brilliant; his wit was inferior to his intelligence, but he had cunning, a singular way of at once finding his personal advantage out of an entangled situation. He put his own well-being beyond everything else, and cared in reality only for his comforts and being left alone to lead an easy, indolent existence among his books, his pictures, his flowers, his manuscripts, all the magnificences of the old home of the Condés. This he had restored with care and a singular artistic knowledge, and had succeeded in endowing it with some of its past glories.

He was a perfect host, even though, perhaps, a little dull; and one enjoyed a first visit to Chantilly more than a second, on

account of the necessity it entailed to perform with its master what is called "le tour du propriétaire," to admire what he admired, to look only upon what he showed you himself, and not to be allowed to roam at will in the avenues of the park, or in the vast halls full of lovely things, and of remembrances of the past. One would have liked to spend hours contemplating the wonders of art gathered under that roof, to examine the sword of the Great Condé, or to look through the quantity of interesting documents, historical and otherwise, that were kept in businesslike order in the great cupboards of the long library, whose windows opened on the meadows, where probably the lovely Madame de Longueville had roamed together with one or other of her numerous admirers.

This solitary place required silence rather than the casual remarks which echoed through its corridors as the motley crowd generally met at the Sunday breakfasts which the Duc liked to give. These breakfasts were quite a feature in the life of the master of this palace, and the queerest assemblage of people could be met at them—Academicians, colleagues of the Duc, military men, foreigners, scientists, diplomats, men of letters and men of the world, ladies of the highest rank and actresses. He made no distinctions, and never cared whether he brought together people who agreed with each other or not. There was no link between his guests, who forgot all about those who had been their companions of the afternoon at Chantilly after that afternoon was over; they never chatted together, and perhaps their host did not care for them to do so. He liked to concentrate around his own person the attention of those who had partaken of his hospitality; he would have felt offended had he caught them talking to each other, and not listening exclusively to himself. He was full of attention to those whom he guessed were admirers of his deeds or works, and took a deal of trouble

to show to self-made people that he esteemed them more than those who were his equal in birth if not in rank. For instance, I remember one day when having at lunch the Duchesse de Noailles and Madame Cuvillier Fleury, the widow of his old tutor, he put the latter on his right and the Duchesse on his left. The fact was instantly noticed by a few Academicians, of what I would call the inferior ranks of the Academy, and instantly it was remarked what a kind, noble and attentive nature was Henri d'Orleans, Duc d'Aumale, who thus ignored the high standing of one of the noblest amongst the noble Duchesses of France in order to show gratitude to the relict of the man to whom he owed his moral training. This action of the Duke was just one of these things he was so fond of doing, in order to provoke admiration. He liked to forget the exclusive traditions of his race whenever he thought that it would ensure for him the sympathies of the mob; that mob which his family had ever courted, to which it owed in part its fame and its successes, and which despised it for the very facility with which it bowed down licking the very dust. Among all the opportunist Orleans the Duc d'Aumale was foremost.

Since the death of his wife and children all his affections had concentrated on his splendid Chantilly, the reconstruction of which had entirely absorbed him from the day of his return to France after the revolution that had overthrown the Bonaparte dynasty. In spite of all that has been said he had no political ambitions. He knew that he had no right to the crown of France, and that he could not pretend to it without foregoing all the principles which he did not possess, but which he was supposed to represent. Having been sounded as to whether he would accept the Presidency of the Republic, he had consented to do so, because he had been told that he had to do it, but he did not regret that, as events

turned out, the candidature of Marshal MacMahon was preferred to his own. He returned to his country home, to his roses, his pictures, his works of art, his horses, and his dogs, and took up again his easy, happy, careless life as a grand seigneur of olden times, absorbed in his books and studies, able to gather his friends round him whenever he liked, and to do the honours of his stately domain. Fond of hunting the stag in his vast forests, he was not above coming to Paris whenever he wanted amusements that would have been incompatible with the grandeur of Chantilly—to kiss the hand of a Leonide Leblanc, or to enjoy an hour's chat with the lovely Countess de Castiglione, whose beauty then was on the wane. He was an amiable talker, rather dry in his remarks, but always ready to make use of his many remembrances and his vast erudition to add to the enjoyment of those with whom he was conversing. He told an anecdote pleasantly, and related an historical fact with a grand eighteenth-century manner, without offending the Republican instincts of those who were listening to him.

His appearance was entirely that of a grand seigneur of old, no matter whether he was dressed in his uniform or evening clothes, with the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour across his chest, or whether he was met walking in his park in corduroy trousers, and gaiters rather the worse for wear. His thin, delicate features, with the white tuft on the chin, the long, soft, silken moustache, and eyes with a haunted look, reminded one of a picture by Velasquez or Van Dyck. The figure was slightly bent, but wiry and agile, and had kept much of the elasticity of its younger days.

He talked quickly, sometimes sharply, but always with extreme courtesy, and even when disagreeing did so in most measured tones, and with the utmost care not to wound the feelings of those with whom he was in discussion. He had

a sympathetic manner, but not a kingly one by any means. There was nothing regal about him, but there was also nothing that was not gentlemanly in the fullest sense of the word. And sometimes, when one saw him leaning against the pedestal of the statue of the Connétable of Montmorency, which he had had erected in front of his palace of Chantilly, or handling with love and reverence the sword which the Great Condé had carried at Rocroy, for one short, flitting moment he gave one the impression that he was only the guardian of those historical relics of which he was master.

The Duc d'Aumale had never had the initiative to fight for the privileges to which he had been born. In 1848, he was in command of an important army in Algeria, with which he might have fought the insurrectional government with advantage. He either lacked courage, or didn't think it worth while to risk his own personal position as a factor in the France of the future to do so. He resigned his command, with more alacrity than dignity, and accepting as the decision of his country the rebellion of the few, retired to England, and with occasional stays in his Sicilian domains, near Palermo, he awaited in retirement and silence for the dawn of another day which would allow him to return to the France he liked so much and to the Chantilly he loved so well.

When at last that moment came, his first care was to use his efforts to avoid the possibility of a new banishment. In order to do this he opened his doors wide to all political men and to all the literary celebrities of the day. His hospitality was unbounded; he flattered the middle classes, who had suddenly become the leading force in France, with consummate skill. He tried as much as he could to make others forget that he was a member of the ancient house of Bourbon, with whose destinies those of their country had been inseparably associated for centuries. He strove always

to appear to those whom he welcomed under his roof as a private gentleman, the owner of an historical place, and as a member of that Academy to which he was so proud to belong, the membership of which was dearer to him than all the glories of his race. He democratised himself, if such an expression can be pardoned. He came down from the throne, on the steps of which he had been born, into the crowd with which he liked to mix himself, quite forgetting that this crowd could at any minute descend to the gutter, whither they would drag him too whether he liked it or not.

There came, however, a day in the career of the Duc d'Aumale when he felt constrained to assert himself, when for once the blood of Henri IV. spoke in him. It was when he wrote to the President, Jules Grévy, that famous letter which resulted in his being sent to join his nephew across the frontiers of France. This letter was penned after the government had sent the Comte de Paris into an exile whence he was never to return, and he himself had been deprived of his rank and command. The shock was terrible to him, and bitterly did he regret the attack of indignation that had made him speak when he should have remained silent. As he said himself many years later: " J'ai laissé parler mon cœur, tandis que j'aurais dû écouter ma raison " (" I listened to my heart when I ought only to have heard my reason ").

He retired to Brussels, which was nearer than England to the royal home he had adorned with such loving care, in the hope to bequeath it to his race, a living memento of the glories of their ancestors. When he saw himself parted from Chantilly, especially when it became evident to him that he would remain in exile until death released him, he took a resolution which, better than anything else, proves that in his heart and mind his family held but a small place.

He made a will by which he left Chantilly, its collections, its treasures, its library, its historical documents, its park and forests to the French Academy. And he divulged his intention in the hope that, as a reward for the splendid gift he was making to her, France would once more admit him within her doors, and by restoring him to his home thank him for having given it to her.

This act of selfish generosity has been very differently commented upon. Whilst many have admired it, a few old men and women, born and bred in ideas of an age when traditions, love for one's race, and desire to help it to keep its high position and its inheritance were uppermost, have bitterly reproached him for having thus transgressed traditions that ought to have been sacred to him.

This attack of " Christian generosity," as someone wittily termed it, which made him not only forgive the injury that had been done to him, but even reward by a kingly gift the injustice of a country which had used him so mercilessly, not only estranged him from his family, which, though it said nothing, thought a great deal, but also made him lose the sympathies of many former partisans of the Orleans dynasty. This alienation of the home of the Condés, in favour of a Republican government, made all realise that whatever were the qualities of the Duc d'Aumale, they were obscured by his unlimited selfishness.

France also felt the degradation of this gift, and did not hasten to reward the donor of it as he had expected. She left him for some months in Brussels, alone with the shame of his unworthy action, until at last an advocate of talent, Maitre Cléry, succeeded in obtaining from President Carnot the repeal of the decree which had banished the Duke from France. He thereupon returned in haste to his beloved Chantilly, where he took up again his former existence, with

the difference that when he received at his table the members of the Academy he used to tell them: "Maintenant vous êtes ici chez vous, messieurs" ("Now you are at home"). It was related at the time that a member of the learned Assembly took this opportunity to entreat the Duke to change the place of a certain picture which he thought had not been put where it ought to have been hung. Henri d'Orleans' eyes flashed with indignation at this audacity, and drawing himself up very haughtily he said: "Vous vous oubliez, monsieur" ("You forget yourself, sir"), to which, nothing daunted, the impertinent visitor remarked: "Mais, puisque vous venez de dire que nous sommes chez nous, monseigneur" ("But you have just said that we are at home, sir").

Maitre Cléry, to whom the Prince owed his return from exile, did not know him personally, and had never been among those whom he had invited to his receptions. Consequently his action when he undertook to plead the cause of the Duc d'Aumale with the President of the Republic was absolutely disinterested. He had, however, expected a word of thanks for his intervention in the matter. That word was a long time in coming, too long, perhaps, in the opinion of some people. When at last the celebrated advocate received an invitation to lunch at Chantilly, he remarked that it came like mustard after dinner—"comme de la moutarde après dîner."

The last years of the life of the Duc d'Aumale were saddened by uncongenial family stories and incidents, in which his nephews—so gossip said—figured in rather an unpleasant light. Angry beyond words at these rumours, his relations with his people became more and more distant and estranged, and the big family parties that he liked to gather round him in former times took place no more. He kept himself among a small circle of friends, and in the society of Madame de Clin-

champs, a former lady-in-waiting of the Duchesse d'Aumale, whom he married secretly, and who—and this is very characteristic of him—he left very badly off after his death, with nothing but a small pittance out of his many millions. Madame de Clinchamps was invariably amiable. She appeared at the lunches given at Chantilly, and visitors found her sitting by the fire in the tapestried drawing-room, where the Duc used to receive his guests. She did not put herself forward in any way, and never attempted even to do the honours of the place. She must have really loved the Duc, or else she would never have put up with the slights he showered upon her, or accepted the false position in which he left her, and her devotion to him never failed up to his death, after which she retired to a small house on the edge of the Forest of Chantilly, where, at the time I am writing, she lives in strict retirement and in comparative poverty.

I have met most of the celebrities of modern France at the Duc d'Aumale's lunches. He was very catholic as to the people whom he invited, and only required them to be amiable and to listen well to him, without attempting to interrupt. Among his great friends was Jules Lemaitre, the Academician, an amusing, intelligent little man, rather void of manners, who buzzed about in a way that would have been aggressive had it not been so funny. He was full of wit, but sometimes said gauche things, the value of which did not appear to strike his otherwise critical mind. For instance, one day, whilst the Duc was showing to his visitors a lovely collection of miniatures of the Royal Family of France, from the end of the eighteenth century, he interrupted him with the question: "And where, sir, do you keep the letters of M. Cuvillier Fleury?" The late Duc de la Trémouille was standing next to me; we looked at each other, and smiled. Evidently a member of the French Academy of the end of the

nineteenth century could not feel the slightest interest in anything else but Cuvillier Fleury, the bourgeois tutor of a bourgeois pupil, such as the Duc d'Aumale had proved himself to be in the eyes of a certain number of the people whom he had made his friends.

Bonnat, the painter, was also a frequent visitor at Chantilly, and his portrait of the Duc is one of the best pictures that ever came from his brush. The Prince is represented in the uniform of a general, perhaps the same which he wore on the day when, with a cruelty one would have preferred not to have seen in him, he condemned Marshal Bazaine to an ignominious death.

It is related that the Duc d'Aumale used to say that he would like to die at Chantilly, and that he had even left directions how his funeral was to take place. In them he expressed a wish to lie in state in the chapel for a day or two, near the hearts of the Princes de Condé, buried there and respected by the Revolution of 1789. This desire was not destined to be fulfilled. He breathed his last in Sicily, at his castle near Palermo, and his mortal remains were brought back straight to the family vault at Dreux. Chantilly stands empty and deserted now, save on the days when tourists invade it, and roam in the rooms which have rung with women's soft laughter and listened to so many momentous and interesting conversations. No one, even among the old servants still left in charge of the place, ever talks of the Duc d'Aumale, and mention is only made of the former lords of the Castle, of those illustrious and unfortunate Princes de Condé, the souls of whom still fill the old walls their fame has immortalised for ever. In the Gallery des Batailles, as it is called, the sword of the hero of Rocroy still hangs, tarnished with age, but now no reverential hand ever lifts it; only the heavy fingers of a sleepy housemaid dusts it now and then. The

pictures, the portraits, the works of art are in the same place they occupied when an intelligent master had arranged them with loving care. In the long dining-room the table at which so many celebrities and high-born people sat is still there, with chairs standing round it; in the drawing-room the two arm-chairs the Duc and Madame de Clinchamps used to occupy are in the same place; and in the library the ink-stand has been left open with its pen lying beside it. Everything seems a little dingy, a little empty, a little forsaken, everything has the appearance of one of those vast temples of old, whence, according to the words of the Russian poet, "the idols have fled."

## CHAPTER XIII

### The Presidency of Marshal MacMahon

When a coalition of the different parties who constituted the Right in the National Assembly overturned M. Thiers, it was felt everywhere, though perhaps none would say it aloud, that this event was but the first step towards the re-establishment of a monarchy, which could only be that of the Orleans family. In fact, the Chamber was almost entirely composed of Orleanists. The few Bonapartists were too timid to come out openly as such after the catastrophes that had accompanied the fall of the Empire, but they were determined nevertheless to do their best to bring the Prince Imperial back to France as Emperor. There were but few extreme Radicals in the Assembly. Gambetta was perhaps the most advanced member in that direction, together with Jules Ferry and Jules Favre, and their Radicalism would be considered Conservatism nowadays. In fact, the Left, or what was called the Left, resembled rather an opposition as it is understood in England, than a revolutionary party such as later on tried to snatch the government of the country into its hands. France was still under the influence of the eighteen years of Imperial regime it had gone through, and respect for authority had not yet died. The elections, which had been conducted under the eyes of the enemy, had brought back a large monarchical majority to the Assembly. That majority knew very well that so long as M. Thiers remained at the head of the Republic, a restora-

tion, either of the Comte de Chambord, the Comte de Paris, or the Prince Imperial, was not to be thought of. The little man would have defended his own person in defending the Republic. His manner of crushing the Commune, indeed, had shown that he would not hesitate before a display of force, and would be quite capable of sending to prison the leaders of any movement to destroy the government over which he presided.

But when M. Thiers had been put aside, the field was free to the Royalists, and in order to pave the way to a restoration they offered the Presidency of the Republic to the Duc d'Aumale, in the hope that he would see his way to resign his functions to his nephew, and be strong enough to bring him back in triumph to the Elysée.

The Duc d'Aumale accepted. Whether he would have fulfilled the hopes that had been centred in him is another question. My opinion is that he would have shown himself even more respectful of the Republic who had called him to her head than M. Thiers or Marshal MacMahon. But we need not go into suppositions, as his election did not take place on account of the Bonapartists refusing to vote for him, being frightened at the thought that he might feel tempted to accomplish another *coup d'état*, and at all events would exclude them from the ranks of his advisers. The Duc d'Aumale once put aside, there remained but two people whose names could have rallied around them the different parties that constituted the Assembly; they were Marshal Canrobert and Marshal MacMahon.

The last mentioned was chosen partly because some believed he was more favourable than his illustrious colleague to the idea of an Orleanist restoration, partly because it was hoped that he would allow others to govern in his name. They forgot that, being used to obedience in military matters,

he would insist on being listened to on political issues, and that his very honesty would not allow him to associate himself with intrigue in governing the country, whose welfare he would consider it was his duty to promote above all other considerations.

Marshal MacMahon was essentially a gentleman. Not superabundantly gifted with intelligence, not, perhaps, possessing much strength of character, he had, nevertheless, a keen sense of right and wrong, a horror of anything that approached intrigue, a great respect for his duty, before the accomplishment of which he never hesitated no matter how painful it might be for him to perform it. He was a brave soldier, an honest man, but he was no politician, and whenever he tried to interest himself in politics he failed utterly in his attempts, partly through want of experience, partly through want of knowledge, and especially because he never knew how to find among the people who surrounded him a majority of supporters.

He never understood why he had been elected President of the Republic, and always imagined that he owed it to his personal merits. This illusion was carefully fostered by his entourage, and by ministers who wanted to persuade him to adopt their own views. It was a great mistake on their part, because had the Marshal been less sure of the infallibility of his own judgments, he might not have risked the *coup d'état* of the 16th of May, which threw France into the arms of the extreme Republican and Radical parties, which have ruled it ever since.

The first ministers of MacMahon were Orleanists of the purest water, and they did their best to bring the Orleans dynasty back to the throne, especially after the publication of the famous letter of the Comte de Chambord, which sealed for ever his fate as a Pretender. They were all, too, gentle-

men by birth and by education, and men of learning and experience. Two among them, the Duc de Broglie and the Duc Decazes, have left their impress on the history of France, and deserve its gratitude for the services they have rendered to her. But all of them were utopian in the sense that they believed in the triumph of the opinions they held. They never admitted the possibility of new people coming to the front, new ideas developing so quickly that they would have to be reckoned with by every government no matter to what shade it belonged. More especially did they fail to foresee the triumph of the Radical and revolutionary elements. They considered them as of no serious importance, perhaps because they had never troubled to study them carefully, and so appreciate their strength.

It is said that the Duc d'Aumale, when sounded as to whether or not he would accept the Presidency of the Republic, and under what conditions, had replied: " Je veux bien être une transaction ; une transition jamais." Marshal MacMahon was to form the bridge of transition from the government of a gentleman to that of a political man, such as the Presidents who have succeeded him have all essentially been. He brought with him to the Elysée traditions that are still respected, and customs that have become a dead letter since his fall. His tenure of office was attended with great dignity, and an amount of state that savoured a little of real Court life such as he had known and understood how to represent. He did not indulge in petty economies unworthy of his high position, and kept open house for his followers and friends, dispensing at the same time a generous and unbounded hospitality in regard to all who came to pay their respects to him in his capacity as First Magistrate of the French Republic. His wife, too, the Duchesse de Magenta, was a really great lady, by birth as well as by education, and she

seconded him to the best of her ability—entertaining for him on a grand scale, receiving foreign ambassadors with a queenly grace combined with the affability of a true *grande dame*. La Maréchale, as she was familiarly called by her friends, was a remarkable woman in her way, and it is very much to be regretted that she refused the whole time that her husband remained in office to interest herself in public affairs, from which she kept aloof as much as she possibly could; she was exceedingly generous, and the poor of Paris remember her to this day.

When the Marshal had to retire into private life, it was found that he had not only spent all the allowance that he received from the State, but also a great deal of his own private fortune, so that when he gave up his high office, he was a poorer man than when he had entered upon it. The Duchesse de Magenta, when she became a widow, was left with less than moderate means, and had to lead a simple existence, devoid of accustomed luxuries. She was a very modest woman, and it is related that she was often to be met in the morning riding in an omnibus, with a basket on her arm, doing her own marketing in company with her cook or housemaid. France did not show herself grateful for the services which, in spite of his many political errors, Marshal MacMahon undoubtedly rendered to her, and did not trouble itself as to the fate of his widow or his children. The Duchesse only received the pension attached to the military position which her late husband had occupied, and had her son, the present Duc de Magenta, not married the daughter of the Duc de Chartres, the Princess Marguerite of Orleans, he would have hardly had enough to live according to the exigencies of his rank as a captain in the French army. The example is rare, and ought not to be forgotten, especially nowadays, when the first preoccupation of people in power

is to lay aside as much money as they can against the time when they have to abandon office.

During the whole time that Marshal MacMahon remained at the Elysée he kept beside him, in the quality of private secretary, the Vicomte Emmanuel d'Harcourt, one of the pleasantest, most amiable, and most intelligent men in Paris society. He was perhaps the only real statesman among the many politicians who surrounded the President, and, had he only been listened to, it is probable that the monarchical restoration, so much desired at that time by all the sane elements in French political life, could have been brought about. Unfortunately, the majority did not credit him with being in earnest, and the few who did so were too much afraid of him not to do all that was in their power to counteract his influence on the Duc de Magenta. It is related that one evening when the President happened to be irritated by all these perpetual hints he was receiving concerning Monsieur d'Harcourt, he asked him abruptly: "Pourquoi, est-ce que vous tenez à rester auprès de moi, et que vous ne cherchez pas à faire partie d'une combinaison ministérielle?" ("Why do you care to stay with me, why don't you try to enter into a Cabinet?") The Vicomte simply replied: "Parce que j'ai de l'affection pour vous, Monsieur le Maréchal, et que je ne tiens pas à vous abandonner aux mains de ceux qui n'en ont pas" ("Because I have an affection for you, Monsieur le Maréchal, and I don't care to abandon you to those who haven't").

MacMahon became very red, but never more after that day did he try to wound the feelings of a man in whom he recognised a sincere friend.

The Republican party has always accused Monsieur d'Harcourt of having inspired the famous letter which the Marshal addressed to Jules Simon, and which brought about

what is known as "the crisis of the 16th of May." This reproach was partly true and partly unjust. It is quite certain that the Vicomte encouraged the President to dismiss a Cabinet which he considered far too advanced in its opinions, and especially because he could not agree with the ideas of Jules Simon, its chief, notwithstanding the great intelligence and the sincere patriotism of the latter. But, on the other hand, it must be said, and it cannot be repeated too loudly, that Emmanuel d'Harcourt always told the President that he could not venture upon such a grave and important step without every possible precaution to ensure its success. First of all he advised the exercise of a considerable pressure on the new elections that were bound to follow upon such a step and the imprisonment of a few leaders whose influence might make them turn against the government. He was a partisan of strong measures, and had that contempt for legality that all daring statesmen have ever professed. The Marshal, on the contrary, would never have dreamed of defying the law, and he refused to adopt any of the measures which not only his secretary but also his ministers—with the exception of the Duc de Broglie, whose rigid Protestant principles, which he had inherited from his mother, prevented him from resorting to any violent actions—recommended to him. I have heard that on the eve of these elections, which had such an enormous influence on the future destinies of France, the Vicomte d'Harcourt was discussing them with M. de Fortoul, who was Minister of the Interior, and they were both deploring the obstinacy of the President of the Republic, who would not understand that once he had entered upon the road of resistance to the wishes of the Chambers, represented by the ministers whom he had dismissed, he was bound to go on and to enforce his wishes upon the nation. Fortoul knew he had

been called by the confidence which the Duc de Magenta had in his honesty to the difficult post which he occupied, but he was well aware that he did not possess the latter's sympathies, so asked the Vicomte d'Harcourt whether there was no means by which the Chief of the State could be convinced that it would be cowardice not to see to the bitter end the adventure in which he had engaged himself. He got from him this characteristic reply: "No! One cannot convince him; because he is a man who, though in a position to command, has never forgotten how to obey."

Fortoul understood, and did not attempt further to shake the convictions of the President, but prepared himself to lose the game which with a little energy might so easily have been won.

Emmanuel d'Harcourt was the man who best understood that honest, feeble, and in some parts enigmatical character of Marshal MacMahon. Apart from him it is to be doubted whether anyone save the Marquis d'Abzac, who was attached to his person during long years, ever guessed what went on in that narrow but well-intentioned mind. The Marquis d'Abzac was at one time a leading figure in Paris society, and I think that no one who has ever known him has forgotten the charming, amiable man he was, the perfect gentleman he always showed himself, and the true friend he remained to all those who had treated him as such. He was the leading spirit of the little Court of the Elysée, where he organised all the balls and receptions that gave it such brilliancy during the tenure of office of the Duc de Magenta, when all that was illustrious in France, even the most confirmed Royalists, considered it an honour to pay their respects to the Head of the State and to his amiable wife. He had the entire confidence of the President, who, perhaps, was more inclined to give it to a soldier like the General

d'Abzac than to a civilian with whom his military soul had but little in common, and whose subtleties of reasoning appeared too complicated for his simple mind. The Marquis had married a Russian, Mlle. Lazareff, whose mother had been a Princess of Courland, related to the famous Duchesse de Sagan. His wife had vast estates in Silesia, and though he did not live with her yet he visited there often, and always made an appearance at the German Court, where he was essentially a *persona grata*, ever since he had accompanied Marshal MacMahon when the latter had been sent to Berlin as an Ambassador of Napoleon III. to represent that Sovereign at the coronation of William I. as King of Prussia.

Very often his visits to the German Court allowed him to clear up misunderstandings between the French Government and the Prussian Foreign Office; misunderstandings that were often provoked by the state of antagonism which existed between Prince Bismarck and the French Ambassador, the Vicomte de Gontaut Biron, about whom I shall have more to say presently. The German Chancellor liked the Marquis d'Abzac, and frequently took him into his confidence, well aware of his tact and discretion. I have heard from a person very much *au courant* of what was going on in the Wilhelmstrasse, that Bismarck once expressed himself to the aide-de-camp of the President of the French Republic, concerning the monarchical intrigues that were going on in Paris. He spoke with a mixture of contempt and regret of the woeful way they were conducted, and of what small chances they had of being successful. D'Abzac replied that of course it was not for him to venture an opinion on a subject that did not enter at all into his activities, but that he had always imagined that Prussia was very much adverse to the re-establishment of a Monarchy in France. The Prince immediately replied: " You are entirely mistaken, we have nothing

against it, our objection is to the people who would inevitably come into power and prominence with it. If we could see in Paris a King without those who want at the present moment to proclaim him, we should, on the contrary, feel far more reassured than we do now at the immediate future both of France and of Germany. Neither the Comte de Paris nor the Prince Imperial would, nor could, risk position by declaring a war against us, the price of which might be the loss of the newly recovered throne. But we greatly dread all the councillors and advisers who would be eager to prove before the country who had sent them to represent it, that they had been right in changing the form of the government, because the one whom they had helped to call into existence was ready to win back for the nation the provinces as well as the prestige that it had lost."

Later on, when speaking of this remarkable conversation with one of his intimate friends, the Marquis d'Abzac had been obliged to own that the German Chancellor had been right in his appreciation of a situation he understood better than did many Frenchmen.

I have already spoken of the obstinacy that was one of the characteristics of MacMahon. Those who induced him so unnecessarily to assert himself in regard to Jules Simon, played on that chord when they persuaded him that it was his duty to check the growing tide of Radicalism, and to attempt to save the Republic from those who were leading it into a path which would alienate from it the sympathy of Europe, at a time when France sorely needed this support. He imagined that by dismissing his Cabinet he was doing a great thing for his country, but being the faithful slave of his convictions, i.e. that the nation ought to be free to express its opinions and its wishes as to the form of government it liked, he did not pursue what he had begun so well, and refused

to allow the Cabinet whom he had called together to fight the battle to the bitter end. For thus he might have ensured, with the help of some moral pressure, the triumph of the step which he had taken more violently than wisely. The result is well known, and though the death of M. Thiers, which happened on the very eve of the elections, carried away one of his greatest and most powerful adversaries, yet the Radical party secured a complete victory. One of the greatest mistakes that Marshal MacMahon ever made in his life was in failing to resign when the result of the elections became known. He sacrificed his ministers, he allowed those who had borne the brunt of the battle to be ousted out of the field and almost out of political life, which for some of them remained fast closed after that experience, and he himself, instead of following them in their retreat, remained still Head of the State, and continued to occupy the Elysée, losing the esteem of those who had considered him, until that time at any rate, a respectable nonentity. He received the new ministers whom his own stupidity had brought into power, he still discussed with them, and he went on trying to push forward his own opinions and his own wishes, unobservant of all the slights that were continually poured upon him. The only time that his Cabinet seriously tried to assure itself of his help in a matter of international politics—the advisability of making some advances to Russia in view of a possible *rapprochement* in the future—he violently opposed the idea, invoking the remembrances of the Crimean War, which, as someone wittily remarked, " he had gone through, but not outlived." After that no one attempted even to keep him in the current of the affairs of the government, and after the elections which took place in the Senate, and which resulted in a majority holding the same ideas as those which already existed in the Chamber, the Marshal himself saw that nothing was left to him but to resign, and, bereft of the

prestige which would have attached to his name had he done so after the 16th of May had been condemned by the nation, he retired into private life, and also into obscurity, which is far worse.

By a strange coincidence he died just when that Russian alliance to which he had been so opposed was very near to becoming an accomplished fact. Also, he was followed to his grave by a deputation of Russian sailors, headed by Admiral Avellan, who came to Paris from Toulon during the memorable visit paid to that town by the Russian squadron which had been sent to return the visit paid to Cronstadt by the French fleet a few months before. It was one of those freaks of destiny which occur so often in life, that at his funeral, too, should be represented the nation against whom he had fought in the Crimean fields and at Sebastopol, and whose soldiers he had never expected would, together with those he had commanded, fire the last volleys over his grave. The old warrior, who, in spite of his mistakes and errors, still represented something of the glory of his country, and was one of the remnants of an epoch and of a regime that had given to the world the illusion of a strong and powerful France, was accompanied to his last resting-place by the sincere regrets of all those who had loved the man, while they distrusted and condemned the statesman, and perhaps even despised his capacity as a politician. But his personal honesty had come out unimpaired from the trials of his public career, his honour had never been questioned, his courage had never been the subject of the slightest doubt. He deserved fully the honours which were paid to him at his death, and the homage that France rendered to him at his funeral.

## CHAPTER XIV

### Two Great Ministers

I have mentioned the Duc de Broglie and the Duc Decazes. They were the last two ministers of the old school of which the Third French Republic could boast. After them came mostly self-made men, who were perhaps cleverer than they had been but who did not possess the traditions of old France, and who brought along with them not only a change of policy but a change in political manners and customs. After the two great ministers of whom I am about to speak, the Republic became democratic, far removed from the aristocratic country it had been whilst they were ruling it.

The Duc de Broglie was the son of remarkable parents. His father, the old Duke Victor, had been a writer, a thinker, a politician and an orator of no mean talent; one, moreover, who, amidst the corruption which had prevailed at the time of the first restoration of the Bourbons, had succeeded in keeping his hands clean from every suspicion. He showed the great independence of his noble, straightforward character when almost alone among his colleagues in the House of Peers he refused to vote for the condemnation of Marshal Ney.

The old Duc's wife was the lovely Duchesse de Broglie, Albertine de Stael, the daughter of the celebrated Madame de Stael, and the granddaughter of Necker. Madame de Broglie was one of those figures who leave their impress on posterity, and whose influence survives them for a long time. She had,

allied to considerable beauty, a noble soul, a great intelligence, and strict Protestant principles, which had communicated a tinge of austerity to all that she said, did or wrote.

Her son Albert inherited much of this Calvinistic severity, which gave him sometimes a harsh appearance and harsh manners. He was one of those men who never will accept a compromise, or resort to diplomacy of whatever kind, to achieve anything they have made up their minds to do. He was unusually well read, a man of considerable erudition, who was more at his ease at his writing-table than in a drawing-room. He had never been frivolous, as one of his friends once said, and had but seldom shown himself amiable. This absence of human passions made him sometimes unjust towards those who had felt their influence, or allowed themselves to be carried away by them. One could not imagine a time when the Duc de Broglie had been young, nor a moment when he had not been absorbed by his duties or his studies. He was a living encyclopædia, and was continually improving his own mind by devoting his attention to some serious subject or other. When he was elected a member of the Academy no one was surprised at it, the contrary would have seemed wonderful because he appeared to have been born an Academician, and to be out of place anywhere else but among the ranks of that select company known as the Institut de France.

The Duc de Broglie possessed a high moral character. He had strong prejudices, no indulgence for others, perhaps because he had never had any for himself; he was narrow-minded in some things, but generous in everything that did not touch on the question of principles. He came from an Orleanist family, and never wavered in his allegiance to the younger branch of the house of France, and when he accepted office, under Marshal MacMahon, he certainly did

so with the idea that he could in time bring back Philippe VII. to Paris as King.

In spite of his apparent coldness and austerity, he had strong political passions, the only ones that his soul had ever known. These passions made him sometimes lose sight of the obstacles in his way, and the natural hauteur of a grand seigneur made him despise adversaries that he ought either to have tried to conciliate or else to have reckoned with more carefully than he did. He was not sympathetic, and very few liked him, but this latter fact did not trouble him much. The only thing he cared for was to be respected, esteemed, honoured by his foes as well as by his friends. No man was ever more respectful of a given word than the Duc de Broglie, and he would rather have died than have broken a promise once made, no matter how rash that promise might have been. He was certainly not a politician of the modern school, and both for him and for his country it might have been better had be confined himself to the historical studies which have made for him such a great name in modern French literature of the graver sort.

An amusing anecdote is related of the Duc de Broglie. He was staying with one of his friends in the country, and one day took up a novel which, forgotten, had been left on the table. With the attention that he always gave to everything he did, he read it through—it was the "Histoire de Sybille," of Octave Feuillet—and then gravely asked his host whether one of the heroes of it was still alive? When the latter, more than surprised, inquired what he meant, he found out that the Duke had thought the book treated of facts that had really occurred, and had not imagined that the tale was just a novel. "Why waste one's time in writing about things that have never existed?" he remarked. "Life is too short to afford it!" And when Feuillet was

elected to the Academy he would never consent to give him his vote, saying that through him he had lost a few hours he might have employed in reading something more useful than a mere romance. For he could not forgive the fact that it had interested him in spite of his abomination for that kind of literature.

One can imagine that a man with such strength of character could not well understand the weakness of Marshal MacMahon, and it is not to be wondered at that the two serious discussions during the few months that elapsed between the birth and the fall of that Cabinet were always known in the annals of Parliamentary France as "the Cabinet of the 16th of May." The Duc de Broglie would have liked to carry through the elections under the flag of Orleanism, to which he was so very much attached, and for whose profit, he had imagined, the Marshal had decided upon his *coup d'état* when he dismissed Jules Simon. When he perceived that the Duc de Magenta had simply given way to an attack of bad temper, the disillusion which he experienced was very great, but he did not think it right to desert the post which he had accepted under a misapprehension, and he and his colleagues only left office when the result of the elections made it but too apparent that their day had come to an end.

The Duc de Broglie never returned to political life after that effort. He spent the rest of his existence in retirement, absorbed in his studies, and seeking among his books an enjoyment that nothing else could give him. One did not meet him often in society, but sometimes he put in an appearance at the house parties given by his son, Prince Amédée de Broglie, at his splendid castle of Chaumont sur Loire, once the residence of Catherine de Medici.

Prince Amédée had married an heiress, Mademoiselle Say,

the daughter of the great sugar refiner, who had brought him something like twenty million francs as her dowry. When her marriage took place one was not used yet in aristocratic France to these unions between the representatives of great names and daughters of the people, and one evening at a party given in honour of the young bride the Comte Horace de Choiseul, well known for his caustic tongue, approached her, and showing her a spot on her dress made by an ice that had fallen upon it, he said: "Vous avez une tâche de sucre sur votre robe, Princesse" ("You have a spot of sugar on your gown, Princess"). Madame de Broglie turned round, and instantly retorted: "Je préfère une tâche de sucre à une tâche de sang" ("I prefer a spot of sugar to a spot of blood"), thus alluding to the murder of the Comte de Choiseul's mother, the Duchesse de Praslin, by her husband.

She is an amiable woman that Princesse de Broglie, in spite of her sharp tongue, and certainly she is one of the pleasantest in Paris society at present.

The Duc Decazes was a great contrast to the Duc de Broglie. Just as clever, though perhaps not so learned as the latter, he was, moreover, a most accomplished man of the world in the fullest sense of that expression. He made himself friends wherever he went, even among the ranks of his adversaries. During the seven years that he remained in charge of the Foreign Office, in several Cabinets, he succeeded in winning for France the respect of Europe, and in presenting the idea that though governments might change in that country, its foreign policy would not depart from the line it had taken. He was frank, loyal, a cultured, gentle, and an excellent, though not a brilliant, politician. Placed in office at a very difficult moment, just after the disasters of the Franco-German War had entirely destroyed the prestige

of his fatherland, he contrived to raise it in the opinion of foreign governments, and to give them a high idea of its moral resources and dignity.

The advent of the Republic had, of course, been received with every feeling of apprehension and distrust, and the old Monarchists, who had already considerably hesitated before they admitted the Bonapartes as their equals, could not but look with distrust at the political adventurers who had replaced them. The Duc Decazes contrived to win for the governments of M. Thiers and of Marshal MacMahon the respect of all those with whom they had to be in contact; he continued, also, the tradition of the grand manners which had distinguished the Duc de Morny, Count Walewski, the Marquis de Moustiers, and all the high-born gentlemen to whom had been entrusted, for nearly a quarter of a century, the task of speaking in the name of France abroad. He renewed old links, and succeeded in forming new friendships which were to be very useful to him as well as to his country in the future.

The name of the Duc Decazes will always remain associated with the so-called German aggression in 1875, when, it is still currently believed in some quarters, the Prussian Government wanted to declare war against France, a war that was only averted by the intervention of the Emperor Alexander II. of Russia, to whom the French Foreign Minister had appealed for help. The story has been related a thousand times, but what has not been said is that with all his intelligence, his tact and his political experience the Duc Decazes fell a victim to the intrigues of the French Ambassador in Berlin, the Vicomte de Gontaut Biron.

M. de Gontaut was one of those noblemen of the old school who have forgotten nothing, and learned but very little He had intelligence, tact, knowledge of the world, but he was

devoted to himself, and entertained the greatest respect for and opinion of his personal capacities.

He had several relations at the Court of Berlin among the members of the highest aristocracy, who, unfortunately for him, were among the enemies and adversaries of Prince Bismarck. He listened to them, appealed to them to carry to the ears of the Emperor William, and especially to those of the Empress Augusta, many things he would have done better to keep to himself, or else to communicate direct to the German Chancellor; he persisted in carrying a personal line of policy, by which he hoped to put spokes in the wheels of the great minister who held the destinies of Germany in his hands, and he allowed himself to be influenced by gossip which was purely founded on suppositions and old women's love of slander.

The result of such conduct became but too soon apparent. Bismarck was not a man to allow himself to be treated as a negligible quantity, and he very soon began in his turn a campaign against the Vicomte de Gontaut, making him feel by slights on every possible occasion that it would be advisable for him to retire from the field of action, at least in Berlin. M. de Gontaut was fond of his position as an ambassador. Moreover, his was such an extraordinary vanity that he allowed himself very easily to be convinced that by remaining at his post he was rendering the greatest of services to his country, because no other man in his place could use the resources he had at his disposal so successfully in learning the secrets of the Berlin Court and of the Prussian Foreign Office.

It was M. de Gontaut who started the war scare, which existed only in his imagination and had sprung from the importance he attributed to himself. Bismarck replied in his memoirs to the insinuations that were made against him at that time, and he proved that neither he nor Von Moltke

and his staff had ever had the idea of attacking France in 1875. I do not think that any serious politician now believes that there was the slightest foundation for the alarm that the French Ambassador had raised. But at that time it was generally believed that European peace had been in peril for a few days until the Emperor of Russia had put in his word and, as it were, forbidden his Imperial uncle to fulfil intentions the latter had never had for one single moment.

To anyone who knew Prince Bismarck it would be needless to point out how these manœuvres of the Vicomte de Gontaut exasperated him. He judged them for what they were: Gontaut's desire to make himself important, and to give himself the appearance of having been the saviour of France. In a conversation which he had many years later with Count Muravieff, at that time Councillor of Embassy in Berlin, and later on Minister for Foreign Affairs in Russia, the German Chancellor alluded to the incidents which had then taken place and expressed his astonishment that a shrewd politician like the Duc Decazes could have been taken in by the nonsense, *les bêtises*, as he termed them, that M. de Gontaut was continually writing to him. Count Muravieff, who had been in Paris at that particular moment, could have replied had he liked, that the Duc was not so guilty as it appeared, because he was surrounded by a group of partisans of the Orleans family, who all pretended to be *au courant* of what was going on in Berlin, through their cousins who were living there, and who did their best to corroborate all that he heard from the Vicomte de Gontaut concerning the plans of Prince Bismarck and his treacherous intentions in regard to France.

At that period Orleanism was flourishing, and succeeded even in influencing the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who found it difficult to disbelieve all that was told him on every side,

and which he did not suspect as coming from the same source. It is certain that he fell into the snare, and that when he appealed to Alexander II., it was in the firm belief that a new invasion of his country was about to take place. He found an ally in the person of old Prince Gortschakov, whose vanity seized with alacrity the opportunity that was given to him to appear before the world in the capacity of the saviour of France. Newspapers were put into motion. *The Times*, through its Paris correspondent, the famous Blowitz, started the alarm, and soon it became an established fact that it was through the intervention of Russia alone that France had been snatched from the grip of Germany. The legend still subsists with some people; its chief result was that we incurred the enmity of Prince Bismarck, who might have acted differently in regard to Russia during the Berlin Congress had it not been for this unwholesome incident.

Before closing with this subject I must relate the following anecdote. When the German Foreign Office insisted on M. de Gontaut contradicting in his dispatches to his government the alarming news he had been giving to it, he repaired to the house of a lady to whom he was related, and who occupied an important position at the Berlin Court, to ask her advice as to what he was to do. A council of war, if such an expression can be employed, was assembled, in which the old Duc de Sagan and his wife, the clever and amiable Duchesse, took part, and discussed gravely whether or not the desires of Prince Bismarck should be fulfilled, and his denial telegraphed to Paris. After long discussions it was at last decided that M. de Gontaut would write about it later on, but that it would be wisest to allow a few days to elapse before communicating the news to the French public, and that, consequently, it was not necessary to telegraph anything for the present. They could not allow the

legend that the Vicomte de Gontaut had saved France from destruction to die so soon.

It would have been difficult for the Duc Decazes to have discerned right from wrong in such a mass of intrigue. It is to his honour that, notwithstanding the provocations he received, he succeeded in keeping calm, cool and dignified, and that he tried seriously to do his best for his country's interest. He was a slow worker, and this, perhaps, was his bane, because the man whom he had put at the head of his private chancery, the Marquis de Beauvoir, who was his brother-in-law, having married the sister of the Duchesse Decazes, was careless in the extreme, and often allowed subordinates to do the work he ought to have kept entirely under his own control. All these circumstances produced a certain amount of confusion, but nevertheless in spite of these imperfections the administration of the Duc Decazes gave great dignity to the Foreign Office, and considerably raised the prestige of France abroad. He was not, perhaps, a genius, but he was a great minister on account of his honesty, his loyalty, the gentlemanly qualities that distinguished him and that kept him aloof from every dirty intrigue where his reputation might have foundered. When the ministry presided over by the Duc de Broglie had to retire, the Duc Decazes followed it in its retreat, though asked both by Marshal MacMahon and by the leaders of the Republican party whom the elections had brought to power, to keep his functions. He felt he had nothing in common with the men who were henceforward to rule his country, and he persisted in his determination to give up public life. He did not long survive the fall of his party, and when he died no one ever dared to raise one word against him nor to question his deep patriotism, and his devotion to the country he had loved so well and served so faithfully.

## CHAPTER XV

### Paris Society under the Presidency of Marshal MacMahon

A great change came over Paris society after the fall of the Empire. Some of its most brilliant elements disappeared altogether, whilst the Faubourg St. Germain, about which nothing had been heard for such a long time, came suddenly to the front, partly through its associations with the Maréchale MacMahon, who, being née de Castries, was considered as one of the Faubourg, and partly through the certainty that prevailed in many circles as to the imminence of a monarchical restoration, for which everybody was prepared. It is true that the first two years which followed upon the conclusion of peace with Germany were dull ones, so far as public amusements were concerned, but little by little Parisian social life began again, though somewhat on a different plane than during the Empire. Whilst the latter had lasted, the families belonging to the highest aristocracy, which had ruled France in olden times, had kept aloof from the social movement that had been so very luxurious and so very gay when the lovely Empress Eugénie had presided over it. They had lived for the most in the country in their ancestral castles, where they had economised, and cultivated their cabbages and potatoes. The custom of marrying heiresses belonging to the bourgeoisie, or to financiers, had not yet become usual, and military service, not being compulsory as it is nowadays, had not mixed together young men belonging to

all classes, and thus thrown down the barriers of social distinction. The noblesse had transformed itself into a set, into which no intruders were allowed to enter, and when the Duc de Mouchy married the Princess Anna Murat, the cousin of Napoleon III., he scandalised not only aristocratic circles in general but his own family, the de Noailles, who looked very much askance at the lovely bride in spite of the large dowry she brought with her.

After the fall of the Empire, the Faubourg St. Germain began to come out from its seclusion, to live a little more in Paris, and a little less in its country castles. It participated in the gaieties, such as they were, that went on, and even appeared at the receptions of the Elysée, timidly at first, whilst M. and Mme. Thiers presided over them, and then more boldly after they had been replaced by Marshal MacMahon and his wife. Then the different members of the Orleans family opened their doors to a few select guests, and the salons of the Rothschilds became a neutral meeting ground, where in time people belonging to different political opinions saw each other and commingled, at least as regards social relations. Sport, which had hitherto been absolutely unknown among the better classes, became fashionable, and did more than anything else to break down the barriers that had divided the different social sets and coteries that had lived in solitary grandeur until then. The Embassies, too, contributed to bring together representatives of the various sections of fashionable France, because the supremacy of Paris somehow began to be less absolute than it had been under Napoleon III. The fact, also, that the government of the Republic had appealed to the patriotism of some members of the old nobility of the country to help it in its task of restoring the prestige of France abroad—as, for instance, in sending the Duc de Bisaccia to London as Ambassador,

and the Vicomte de Gontaut Biron to Berlin in the same capacity—had done much to bring it partisans, and to procure it more sympathy than the Empire had won for itself at its start. People were feeling that the present state of things was but transitory, and that the existence of that Republic, which no one had expected or foreseen a few days, even, before it became an accomplished fact, was bound to come to an end very quickly, especially under the Marshal, who, it was firmly believed, would use all his influence to bring about a return of the Bourbon dynasty to the throne of France.

The Legitimists were also in possession of large financial means, which they had contrived to accumulate during all the years of their voluntary seclusion. This gave them a distinct advantage over the Imperialists, whose exchequer, which had largely depended on the liberality of the Emperor, found itself in a very low state indeed after it had lost that resource. Ladies who had presided over salons that gave the tone to Paris society, and whose doors had been thrown widely open to all who had cared to enter—such social leaders as the Countess Valevoska, the Princess Pauline Metternich, or the Marquise de Chasseloup Laubat, and the Countess Tascher de la Pagerie—had either left Paris, or retired from the world, or lost the means to entertain with their former splendour. Of the hostesses of olden days there remained but very few, such as the Comtesse Edmond de Pourtalès, the Baronesses Alphonse and Gustave de Rothschild, and the Princess de Sagan, and it was at their houses that the first entertainments after the horrors of the war and the Commune took place. It was under their patronage that Paris found out it still could enjoy itself, though the wild chase after gaiety, which had preceded them, no longer existed. And then a few salons, hermetically closed before, suddenly started a series of entertainments, at which the Comte

and the Comtesse de Paris made frequent appearances, especially after their eldest daughter, the Princesse Amélie d'Orléans, who was later on to become Queen of Portugal, had begun to go out into the world. Among them may be mentioned those of the Duchesse de Galliera and of the Duchesse de la Rochefoucauld Bisaccia, after the latter's return from London, and the retirement of the Duc from public life.

The Duchesse de Bisaccia, born Princesse Marie de Ligne, was a most important person in Paris society, over which she exercised a real influence owing to her husband's enormous fortune, her beautiful house in the Rue de Varennes, and the luxury, the pomp and the grandeur that were displayed at her numerous receptions. A factor which also contributed to her popularity was the fact of the alliances that united the La Rochefoucaulds to all the oldest nobility of France, and the most powerful members of the coterie "du Faubourg St. Germain." The eldest daughter of the Duc by his first wife, Mademoiselle de Polignac, was the Duchesse de Luynes, the widow of the Duc de Luynes, who had fallen bravely during the battle of Patay in 1870, whilst his second and third daughters were in time to become the Princesse de Ligne and the Duchesse d'Harcourt; his eldest son was to marry the only daughter of the Duc de la Trémouille, one of the richest heiresses in France.

Personally, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld Bisaccia was a pompous individual, with the manners of a courtly gentleman, as, indeed, he was, and with just enough wit about him to allow him to hold his own among the people with whom he lived. He had an excellent opinion of his personal capacities, felt himself born to great things, and destined to greater still. He had a despotic temperament, and his way of greeting those who called upon him, or whom he

met at other people's houses, was decidedly haughty. He believed himself to be as much above humanity as his worldly position and his fortune were above those of the generality of mankind. In a word, he carried his ducal coronet everywhere, and even when sleeping remembered that he had to take care of it, or rather that it had to take care of him. He did not admit that anybody could forget what was due to him, and when, long past middle age he took for his second wife the pretty and lively Marie de Ligne, he could not for one single instant think that he failed to represent for her an ideal husband in every way, or that her fancy might have led her to choose a younger and handsomer and merrier companion of her life.

The Duchesse, however, succeeded very soon in finding diversion in other directions than in the constant companionship of her pompous and solemn husband. She was one of those beings who always succeed in taking for themselves the good things of life. Secure in her position, and having very soon come to the conclusion that the Duc's vanity would never allow him to think that his wife might look beyond him for the happiness to which every woman is entitled, she managed to arrange her existence in such a way that many roses helped her to bear its thorns. There was a time when almost every man of note in Paris society found himself one of the admirers of the Duchesse de Bisaccia, and also one of her friends. She was always pleasant, always kind, always good-tempered, always ready to make others happy. Pretty in her youth, she very quickly became stout, but this did not prevent her from going about or attending any of the entertainments at which it was deemed fashionable to be seen. She was fond of dress, but yet always appeared untidy, perhaps on account of her corpulence. She generally put on her tiara in such a way that five minutes after it had

been fastened on to her head it got crooked and hung on one side, but though this gave her whole person an original appearance it did not make her ridiculous, as it would have made another woman. The Duchesse could not be ridiculous, no matter what she wore, nor what she did. She was essentially a great lady, even when not ladylike, which often occurred, because her manners were distinctly unceremonious, and had a dash of Bohemianism about them such as is not often met with in the circles in which she generally moved. I use the word "generally" on purpose, as there were times when the Duchesse did not object to visiting, with one or other of her numerous friends, places and people more or less unconventional. But, somehow, whatever she did or said no one seemed to mind, and she remained until the last the favourite of a society over which she reigned for nearly forty years, and by which she is missed to this very day.

Madame de Bisaccia was exceedingly fond of entertaining, and gave sumptuous receptions in her Hotel de la Rue de Varennes, which were considered landmarks in the horizon of fashionable Paris. These receptions were very stately; it would have been impossible for them to be otherwise in the presence of the Duc. During the septenary of Marshal MacMahon they were frequent, especially and always honoured by the presence of a royalty or two. The Duchesse had a grand way of receiving her guests, and when she stood on the top of her beautiful old staircase she appeared every inch of her to be one of those great ladies of the eighteenth century such as we see in the pictures of Latour or Largillière—a queen without a crown, but with courtiers, and surrounded by regal state.

It was rumoured that at these feasts, which took place in the Hotel de Bisaccia, many dark plots against the Republic were hatched. The Comte de Paris used to receive some

of his adherents in a remote room there whilst his daughter was dancing in the ball-room, and the Comtesse gave audiences to ladies who craved to be presented to her, with the dignity she had learnt in the royal palace of Madrid, where she had been born. It was under the auspices of the Duc that the leaders of the Legitimist party persuaded the head of the House of Orleans that, in order to recover the throne which his grandfather had lost, a reconciliation had to be effected between him and the Comte de Chambord; it was also there that a plot was conceived to persuade Marshal MacMahon to lend himself to a restoration, which was not only desired but which had been in a certain sense already discounted among the majority of the people who were guests at the receptions of the Hotel de Bisaccia.

All this is now a thing of the past. Good-natured Duchesse Marie died a good many years since, and the pompous little Duc has followed her to the grave; their eldest son has also disappeared from this worldly scene, whilst his widow, Charlotte de la Trémouille, lives in retirement, and moves in quite a different set from the one which had frequented the salons of Madame de Bisaccia. The Hotel de la Rue de Varennes belongs to the second son of the Duchesse, who has inherited from an uncle the title of Duc de Doudeauville, and who has married the granddaughter of M. Blanc, of Monaco fame—a woman with more pride than charm, who knows the value of the millions which she brought as her dowry to her husband, and who will never play in Parisian society the part which her mother-in-law filled so well.

I have already said that the eldest daughter of the Duc de Bisaccia had been married to the Duc de Luynes. She became a widow at the age of twenty, and never married again, preferring to keep her great name and title, and understanding that this would not prevent her from living her own

life in the way she liked best. She was a charming creature, this Duchesse de Luynes, gifted with great talents, and possessed of an engaging manner that was quite peculiar to her. People who knew her well used to say that she had an abominable temper, but of this last fact the general public was not made aware, and it is quite certain that she was greatly liked by nearly all those who knew her. She lived most of the year at her castle of Dampierre, which had been left to her for life by the Duc, and received in great state in that historical domain, made illustrious by the remembrance of all the famous people to whom it had previously belonged, or who had been visitors under its hospitable roof. Ill-natured gossips pretended that during her children's minority she had managed to squander a good part of the fortune which they had inherited from their father, and which had been left under her personal control, and it is certain that her son, the present Duc, in spite of the large dowry which his wife, the daughter of the Duchesse d'Uzès, of Boulanger fame, had brought to him, had to exercise a rigorous economy in order to restore something of its past glories to the house of Luynes. But during the lifetime of the Duchesse Yolande no one dared to make any allusion to the carelessness with which she had attended to her children's interests, and she exercised a despotic sway over them, and never allowed them to question anything she decided to do. Dark things were hinted about her, but we may be allowed to consider them as calumnies, and to remember her as one of the pleasantest women among the many who reigned over Paris society at the period of which I am writing.

The La Rochefoucauld was a very numerous family, divided into ever so many branches, and owing to the similarity of names a good deal of trouble ensued, until the identity of all of them was discovered, especially

to persons not very well up in the mysteries of the Almanach de Gotha.

The Comte de la Rochefoucauld was an amusing personage, and anything more funny than his admiration of the family to which he belonged could scarcely be met. His whole universe consisted in the grandeur of the origin of the La Rochefoucaulds, and the sole reason of his existence, as well as the only object of his thoughts, was how to persuade others to view it in the same light that he did. According to him, God came first and the La Rochefoucaulds next, and I am not quite sure whether he did not consider in his inmost thoughts that even in Heaven they ought to be awarded precedence at the banquet of Eternity over the saints of humble origin.

It is related that one day when he was in England someone mentioned the old saying, in relation to one of the most noble of the many noble houses Great Britain can boast, which speaks of "all the blood of all the Howards," Count Aimery smiled modestly. "Yes," he replied, "the Howards are great people, but I have known greater ones" ("Je connais mieux qu'eux").

One can imagine how this weakness of that amiable man, for he was amiable indeed, was laughed at, but nevertheless he contrived to create for himself a unique position in Paris society, and talked so much and so constantly over his right to occupy the seat of honour at every dining-table he was asked to honour with his presence, that he succeeded in getting it, —and no one would have dreamed of denying it to him. Even when he happened to be in the same room as a Duke whose supremacy he deigned to recognise and to admit, one was very careful to award him the next best seat.

Comte Aimery was married to a charming woman, Mademoiselle de Mailly Nesle, whose house in the Rue de l'Univer-

sité was for many years considered one of the most hospitable among the many hospitable ones in Paris. She was most exclusive as to the people whom she invited to it, but when once she had allowed them to cross her threshold, she never dropped them later on, or showed any difference in the way in which she welcomed them, even when she did not find them quite congenial or entirely sympathetic. She was rather stiff and certainly dull, and the parties which she used to give regularly during the spring season were anything but lively, partly because the guests felt that they ought not to think about anything else but the greatness of the La Rochefoucaulds, and the honour which was conferred upon them by their admittance under the roof of a member of that illustrious family; partly because anything that would have borne even the most remote likeness to amusement or mirth would have seemed out of place in those large rooms furnished in the seventeenth century style, where on all the walls hung solemn pictures of dead and gone ancestors of the hosts. But to be invited to attend a social function, no matter of what kind, by Madame Aimery gave one at once a position in Paris society, putting one immediately on the level of the upper ten thousand who constituted its most exclusive set, and by reason of that circumstance any new arrival or foreigner aspiring to make a position for himself, thought it his or her duty never to miss any of the receptions given at the hotel in the Rue de l'Université.

Madame Aimery de La Rochefoucauld died a year or two ago, and the hospitable gates of her house have remained closed ever since. Her only son, Comte Gabriel, is married to Mademoiselle de Richelieu, the sister of the present Duke of that name and the daughter of the widowed Duchess, who later married the Prince of Monaco. The Princesse de Monaco is a Jewess by origin, the daughter of the banker

Heine, and it was a hard pill to swallow for Count Aimery when he had to consent to this union of his only son with a girl who, though charming in herself, still could not boast of the thirty-two quarterings which he considered as indispensable in such cases. He submitted, however, with better grace than he would have done had a few millions not helped him to do so, together with the consciousness that these millions would allow his heir to keep up the state which befitted his station in life. Now Count Aimery is an old man, far advanced in the sixties, if not in the seventies, and is but little seen in society, especially since the death of his wife. His greatest delight consists in being consulted in matters of etiquette, or being asked to arrange seats at a dinner table. His constant occupation is the study of the Almanach de Gotha and books of that kind. He is as happy as a man devoid of cares can be, and probably will live a good many years yet, being so forgetful of anything that does not concern the glories of the La Rochefoucauld family that he will surely even forget to die. Should he ever remember to do so, the Faubourg St. Germain will lose its greatest authority in matters of social etiquette and social precedence.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A Few Prominent Parisian Hostesses

Among the great ladies who began to receive society in their ancestral houses during the presidency of Marshal MacMahon can be mentioned the Duchesse de Rohan, at that time still Princesse de Léon; the Duchesse de Galliera, of whom I have already spoken; and a crowd of hostesses of minor standing within the social horizon, who hastened with more or less alacrity to follow their example. The Comtesse Mélanie de Pourtalès opened once more the doors of her hotel in the Rue Tronchet, as did the Baroness Alphonse de Rothschild her magnificent palace in the Rue St. Florentin, whilst Madame Edouard André very soon contrived, thanks to her husband's enormous fortune and her own great talent as a painter, to introduce herself into the most select circles of Paris society, and to have all its celebrities at her receptions given in her splendid dwelling on the Boulevard Haussmann.

Little by little social life began to re-establish itself, though on an entirely different scale than formerly, and, strange to say, society became ever so much less exclusive than when a distinct line of separation existed between the Monde des Tuileries, as it was called, and the other coteries which abounded in the capital.

Madame de Galliera was one of the last representatives of the *grandes dames* of the time of Louis Philippe, when even great ladies got imbued with a certain tinge of middle-class leanings, which were the distinctive feature of that

middle-class Court over which Queen Marie Amélie presided, where it was not considered as against etiquette to appear before the Sovereigns with an umbrella, and where the King did not hesitate to peel a fruit with a penknife. Madame de Galliera was polite and amiable, very correct in everything she did, and very much convinced of the exceptional importance which her numerous millions gave her in the world where she moved with more ease than pleasure. She belonged to a coterie composed of widely differing elements, and where rigid dames could be found together with some who posed as such, though with the heavy burden of a well-filled past upon their shoulders. Such, for instance, as the Duchesse de Dino, who in her young days had been a friend of Madame de Galliera, though considerably older than the latter.

At the time I am talking about, that descendant of the Genoese Doges and daughter of the ancient house of Brignole-Sale was affecting the most considerable devotion to the Orleans family, and had put her sumptuous house at the disposal of the Comte de Paris, who inhabited it until the decree of expulsion was enforced against him. He held there the reception on the occasion of the wedding of his daughter, the Princess Amélie, with the heir to the throne of Portugal. This reception brought him bad luck in general, because it was the cause of a quarrel between him and his capricious hostess, who, instead of leaving him her vast fortune as she had intended, willed a considerable portion of it to the Empress Frederick of Germany, with whom she had struck up a violent friendship at the time the Emperor was struggling with the horrors of his last illness at San Remo. She left her house in Paris to the Austrian Emperor, whose Embassy has been located in it ever since.

Madame de Galliera was a very considerable personality

in Paris society, but no one liked her, and not a few stood in fear of her because she could be terribly rude when she liked, and had a peculiar way of entirely crushing those she did not care for, or against whom she thought she had a grudge. Her relations with her only son were peculiar, and for reasons it is not for me to discuss he refused to accept the slightest portion of her enormous wealth, or to be known by any of the numerous titles that belonged to her, calling himself plain M. Ferrari, and preferring to earn his own living rather than enjoy millions to which he felt he had no moral right. His strong principles rebelled against compromises, about which no one else would have been troubled.

The present Duchesse de Rohan, at that time still Princesse de Léon, was a very different person from Madame de Galliera. Mademoiselle de Verteillac by birth, she brought an immense dowry to the Prince de Léon when she married him ; it restored to the house of Rohan some of its past splendours. With her money she rebuilt the old castle of Josselin, and made it one of the landmarks of Brittany. The receptions she held in her house on the Boulevard des Invalides were exceedingly sumptuous and numerous ; some of the fancy balls that took place there, indeed, are still talked of. She was hospitable, kind, clever in her way, but rather inclined to vulgarity, perhaps on account of her stoutness, and partly because her whole manner was too good-natured to be distinguished. Looking at her, one might have thought her to be anything but a Duchesse de Rohan, but she was and is still very much liked, because she has always shown herself generous, indulgent for others, and absolutely devoid of snobbishness. Madame de Rohan has pretensions to be considered a literary person, and has written a few books, which her title and position in society have helped to make popular. She is

now an old woman, who has known the sorrows of life, having lost a charming daughter, the Comtesse de Périgord, who was snatched away from her in the flower of her youth and beauty; but the Duchesse has kept her pleasant smile and kind welcome, and is decidedly a popular personage in Parisian society.

The years that have sat rather heavily on the Duchesse de Léon have spared the lovely Countess Mélanie de Pourtalès, who, although a great-grandmother at present, is just as lovely an old woman as she was a splendid young one. The smile, the eyes, the expression, have retained their former charm and the soft melodious voice its youthful ring. One cannot call Madame de Pourtalès a great lady, in the sense which the French attach to this expression of *grande dame*, which has no equal in any other language; but she was essentially the *femme charmante* of the time in which she was born, pleasant, simple, with no shred of affectation about her a thoughtful hostess, and a faithful friend to those to whom she had attached herself; moreover, of no mean intelligence, of perfect tact, and with a wonderful knowledge of the world. She saw at her feet all the men of her own generation, and went on gathering the admiration of those who belonged to a later one. Her receptions were select, in the sense that at them one only met social stars; they were not exclusive—bankers and financial magnates elbowed young beauties in their prime, or authors, whether of repute or simply fashionable for the moment. When she passes away she will not be forgotten, and her name will always remain associated with the fate of the Second Empire and with the Third Republic.

I have spoken of Madame Edouard André; before her marriage she had been known as Mademoiselle Nelly Jacquemard, a painter of wonderful talent, whose portraits of M

Thiers and M. Dufaure will rank among the most remarkable works of art of the end of the nineteenth century in France. She had fascinated M. André, the son of a banker, blessed with a considerable number of millions, who had been one of the most fashionable men of the Société des Tuileries towards the end of the reign of Napoleon III. M. André, already old and nearly paralysed, had fallen in love with the artist at the time she was painting his picture, and finding that their tastes in many things harmonised he had married her. Mlle. Jacquemard proved herself grateful, and made an excellent wife to the tired, weary man, who found in her what he had wished—a companion and a nurse. When he died he left her all his riches, together with his wonderful house and the numerous works of art that it contained, and to which she considerably added.

Madame André was an amusing little woman, absolutely vulgar in appearance and manners, but who moved in the best society, and whose entertainments, absolutely devoid of stiffness, were as amusing as large receptions can be. She was made very much of by the Orleans family, who flattered her in the secret hope that she would be induced to make a will in their favour, but that hope was to prove a barren one, because Madame André left all that she possessed to the Institut de France, with injunctions to transform her palace into a museum. She is supposed to have said, not without a certain malice, that in doing so she was following the example given to her by the Duc d'Aumale, and that consequently she believed the way she had disposed of her property would meet the approval of the latter's numerous nephews and nieces.

By an extraordinary freak of her rather peculiar character Madame André, after her marriage, entirely neglected the art to which she had owed her former celebrity. She abso-

lutely refused to take again a brush or a pencil in her hand, and was even angry when anyone made an allusion to her wonderful talent in that line. It seemed as if she was ashamed of Nelly Jacquemard, and yet it was to Nelly Jacquemard she had owed the conquest that she had made of M. Edouard André and his many millions.

The Rothschild family, who perhaps had been more powerful during the reign of Louis Philippe than later on, at least as regards the political influence and power which they wielded, had acquired a far greater social position during the Second Empire, and one which became even stronger after its fall, when for one brief moment they transferred their allegiance to the Comte de Paris and to the whole Orleans family. The Baron Alphonse was a very great personage indeed, and one of whom even kings and countries stood in awe. He had married one of his cousins, the daughter of the London Rothschild, and the grace, beauty, and intelligence of his wife won them many friends among Parisian society. The couple entertained on a large scale, and their balls, dinners, and shooting parties at their lovely castle of Férrières were celebrated for the luxury displayed at them and for the discriminating choice of the guests invited. It was at Férrières that the Princess Amélie, the daughter of the Comte de Paris, made her début in society, and later on, especially during the Exhibition of 1878, the Rothschilds opened their doors widely to the best French and foreign society. The death of their eldest daughter, Bettina, married to her cousin, Baron Albert Rothschild of Vienna, put an end to those brilliant festivities. The Baroness Alphonse hardly ever went out after that, and contented herself with seeing a few intimate friends at her own house. The only other great function at the hotel in the Rue St. Florentin was the reception given in honour of the marriage of Edouard, the only son of Baron and Baroness

Alphonse de Rothschild, with the lovely Mademoiselle Halphen, an event which was very shortly followed by the death of the old Baron.

His widow only survived him for a short time. She had grown very eccentric towards the last, and suffered from the mania of thinking herself poor and obliged to economise. Madame Edmond de Pourtalès was about the only person whom she cared to see, and the latter remained with her constantly, never leaving her bedside during her last short illness. The hotel in the Rue St. Florentin still remains closed, as its present owners do not seem to care much for society, and it is very much to be doubted whether it will ever witness the sumptuous entertainments that had won for it such fame in past times.

Another house which has passed into other hands, being now occupied by M. Seligmann, a merchant of curiosities, is the Hotel de Sagan, Rue St. Dominique, where the Princesse de Sagan, the daughter of the banker Seillères, used so frequently to entertain from the days when her marriage brought her into the most exclusive set of Paris society. Madame de Sagan was a tall, slight, fair woman, with pleasant manners, who was very much liked by a good many men, but had never been able to get on with her own husband. He was the eldest son of the Duc de Valencay and the grandson of the famous Duchesse de Dino. He spent right and left, and as his father either could not, or would not, give him more, he had been obliged to seek among the daughters of financial houses a companion of his life. He did not care in the least for his wife, though he tried to launch her into society, and to help her in acquiring a great position. The Princess made the best of his advice, but very soon discovered that if she wanted to keep her prestige in the eyes of the world, she had better remove her fortune from the control of her husband.

The couple separated after stormy quarrels, that formed the main topic of public conversation for a long time, and the Princess found many people willing to console her in her solitude. From time to time an ugly scandal arose in connection with either her doings or those of the Prince, who very often found need to have recourse to his wife's purse. He obliged her to pay dearly for his silence concerning things that, if revealed, might have impaired that worldly position for which she cared above everything else.

It is related that once when the heir to one of the thrones of Europe had signified his intention to be present at an entertainment given by Madame de Sagan, some relatives had explained to her that it would be more suitable, especially in view of the fact that the Prince's wife would also be present, to have a master of the house to play the host, and to receive them together with her. She then began negotiations with the Prince de Sagan, who first of all stipulated he should be given a handsome cheque of not less than four figures, to ensure his presence in his wife's house, and who consented, after having received it, to make an appearance in his former home, to give a look at all the arrangements made in honour of the occasion, and after having received the royal couple at the bottom of the staircase of the hotel in the Rue St. Dominique, to play the host with the perfection that he always performed his social duties. When the last guest had left, he kissed his wife's hand with courtly grace, and took leave of her in his turn with a playful remark of some kind or other, and for a long time the couple did not meet again.

The Prince de Sagan was considered the leader of everything that was fashionable in Paris. It was he who organised the racecourse of Auteuil, and who helped greatly to

popularise Americans among Parisian society, where, for a handsome consideration, so at least it was rumoured, he introduced them into his particular set, where every word he uttered was law, which, like those of the Medes and Persians, altered not. One used to see him often at the Opera in the box belonging to the Jockey Club, with his inevitable eyeglass hanging on a broad black ribbon, a fashion he was the first to introduce. He occupied two small rooms at the club of the Union, not being possessed of enough means and having too many creditors to be able to indulge in the luxury of a private apartment, and it was there that he was stricken with paralysis, from which he never recovered, and which deprived him both of his speech and of his mental faculties. It was at this juncture that Madame de Sagan behaved with great generosity and a singular power of forgiveness for past injuries. As soon as she heard of the lamentable condition to which her husband had been reduced, she drove to the club, and had him removed to her own house, where she nursed him with the utmost devotion; thereafter the large receptions and garden parties which she regularly gave in spring and which constituted a feature of the Paris season, became a thing of the past, and the hospitable gates of the hotel in the Rue St. Dominique were closed for ever.

The Princesse de Sagan, who in the meanwhile, through the death of her father-in-law, had become the Duchesse de Talleyrand, was not rewarded for her self-sacrifice. She died quite suddenly, before the Duc, who was left alone and infirm to the mercies of his two sons and of hired servants. The old man dragged out an existence for something like ten years or so, and at last died in poverty and solitude, expiating his formerly brilliant life more cruelly and more bitterly than he perhaps deserved.

One of his sons, the present Duc de Talleyrand, to whom I shall refer again, is married to the American heiress, Miss Anna Gould, whose divorce from the Comte de Castellane made such a sensation a few years ago, but the hotel in the Rue St. Dominique has been sold, and already half the magnificent garden in which it stood has been built upon with huge houses, whilst the inside of the palace is turned into an antiquary's shop; bric-à-brac of all kinds encumbers the lofty rooms where kings and queens moved with stately grace; it dishonours the famous staircase at the top of which the Princesse de Sagan, dressed in the costume of a Persian Empress covered with priceless jewels and with a little negro boy holding a sunshade over her head, received her guests at one of the most famous of her many famous fancy balls.

There was one salon in Paris which was not by any means so brilliant as that of the Comtesse de Pourtalès, the Princesse de Sagan, and the Duchesse de Bisaccia, but which enjoyed a popularity that has never been equalled. I am thinking of that of the Duchesse de Maillé, that stately old lady with the many charming daughters who, without any affectation of pomp and without the least shade of stiffness, welcomed almost every evening her many friends with her bright smile and kind words. Madame de Maillé was one of those women that are but seldom met with, who combine the dignity of the *grande dame* with the indulgence and the abandon, if one can use such a word, of the perfect woman of the world. She was clever, and she appreciated cleverness in others; she could talk well, and listen even better still; she knew how to bring into evidence all the perfections and qualities of her friends, and she always found reasons to excuse their faults or their imperfections. She was discreet, and never made use of the many confidences that were constantly poured

into her ear; she had always ready some good advice to give to those who required it, and she liked to see people happy around her, to watch young people amuse themselves, and though excessively strict in everything that was connected with appearances, so very polite that somehow in her presence no one dreamed of breaking the code established by society in that respect. Madame de Maillé loved politics, and enjoyed exceedingly the conversation of literary people. Almost all the celebrities that Paris could boast of were the habitués of her salon. She used to receive them seated by her fireside, in her plain black gown, with a lace cap over her silvery hair and her everlasting knitting in her hands. She at once put them at their ease, and found out the most appropriate things to tell them. Her house was restful in our age of restlessness, and though there was not the least shade of hauteur about the old Duchesse, the last representative of the ancient family of the Marquis d'Osmond, yet one felt at once, on seeing her, that one stood in the presence of a really great lady.

Now this hospitable salon is also a thing of the past. The Duchesse de Maillé has been dead these last ten years or so, and all her children have settled in houses of their own. Her daughters, Madame de Nadaillac, the Marquise de Ganay, and Madame de Fleury, though all distinguished and amiable women, perhaps because they are still too young, have not acquired that inimitable charm, ease in their manners, and dignity in their bearing which belonged exclusively to their charming mother.

The Duchesse de Maillé was an exception among the old ladies of aristocratic Paris. There was no stiffness, such as, for instance, distinguished the old Princesse de Ligne and the Duchesse de Mirepoix, and some others whose names I have already forgotten. I do not think that anything more

solemn than the receptions of the Princess de Ligne have ever been invented. She was a Pole by birth, belonging to the old family of Lubomirski, a representative of which, Prince Joseph Lubomirski, was at one time a well-known boulevardier. Anything more formidable in the shape of a dowager could hardly be found in the whole world. One could not dream even of sitting in a chair in her august presence, and generally dropped down meekly on one of the numerous stools which adorned her drawing-room and which reminded one of a church without an altar. She was ill-natured, too, cruel when she liked—and she liked it often; severe in her judgments, and inexorable in her decisions. Her numerous grandchildren were all afraid of her, and when she decided that the head of the house of Ligne was to marry her own granddaughter, Mlle. de La Rochefoucauld Bisaccia, neither one nor the other, to their own future sorrow, dared to say a word in opposition, for never was there a union more ill-assorted. When it ended in a divorce no one felt surprised. At the time this last-mentioned fact took place the Princess Hedwige de Ligne had long been dead.

There were other houses in Paris which, perhaps, were less select, but certainly more amusing and agreeable than those in the high circles I have just mentioned. There existed salons which were truly Bohemian, but which also exercised a considerable influence on the sayings and doings of society. I have mentioned already old Madame Lacroix, whose house saw purely literary receptions, and at whose hospitable hearth all the distinguished foreigners who arrived in Paris used to meet. Then there was the salon of Madame Aubernon de Nerville, where Academicians were usually to be met, that of Madame de Luynes, and last, but not least, the salon of Madame Juliette Adam, who wielded a really regal power among a certain set, and who certainly succeeded in being

considered as a political power, especially after Gambetta began to seek her advice in matters pertaining to the affairs of the government. But this last house, as well as its amiable and clever mistress, deserve more than a passing mention; they require a chapter to themselves in order to be duly appreciated.

## CHAPTER XVII

### Madame Juliette Adam

It will be hardly possible ever to write a history of the Third Republic without mentioning Madame Juliette Adam, the beautiful, clever and attractive woman whose influence at the end of the nineteenth century, not only on some of the most important personalities in France but also on many foreign notabilities, was so considerable. Her efforts and influence had much to do with the development of the events which ultimately led to the consolidation of the French Republic, and which, after having been the object of her most ardent worship, ended by finding her one of its enemies. Some people are born under a lucky star; upon them everything smiles, and they can do nothing that fails to turn out well. Such a being was the lovely Juliette la Messine, who, timid and still unaware of her own personal attractions, appeared on the horizon of Paris society at one of the parties given by the Comtesse d'Agoult. The Countess was "Daniel Stern" in the world of letters, the mother of Cosima Wagner and Madame Emile Ollivier, and the heroine of the most lasting romance in the life of the composer Liszt. Madame d'Agoult, about whom I cannot say much because I have never met her, was in the late 'fifties a very important personage in Parisian society, though her own circle had repudiated her since the scandal of her adventure with Liszt. But though very few women cared to be seen at her house, most men of note, whether in politics or in the world of letters, considered

it an honour to be asked to her house. She presided over a salon that dictated the tone in many things, and where she succeeded in grouping together many celebrities who, perhaps, but for her would never have had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with each other.

Juliette la Messine, then in the full bloom of her fair beauty, had just written a book of philosophy and criticism called "Les Idées anti-Proudhoniennes," which was a reply to an attack made by Proudhon on Georges Sand and on Madame d'Agoult herself. She sent a copy of her book to Daniel Stern, who was very much struck by its virile, lucid composition, and thinking it was the work of a man who, in order to disguise his identity, had assumed a woman's name, wrote in reply to the author, that she felt surprised at his having taken a feminine pseudonym, while women generally tried to pass off as men in their writings. When she saw Mlle. la Messine she was at once attracted by her peculiar and wonderful charm; a friendship that was only to come to an end with the life of the Comtesse d'Agoult was at once formed between the two women, who had a great deal in common, and who were both enthusiastic, eager to perform noble deeds and to work for the welfare of humanity. It was also at one of the receptions of Daniel Stern that Juliette la Messine met for the first time Edmond Adam, whom she was to marry later on and under whose name she was to reach celebrity.

One of the results of their marriage was the creation of a new salon in Paris, which very soon became a centre of political activity. It was at the time when the Republican party, vanquished by the *coup d'état* of Napoleon III., by which he had definitely imposed himself and his dynasty upon a more surprised than terrified France, was beginning to raise its head again. Thiers, who at that particular moment

thought fit to join the ranks of the enemies of the Empire, was continually reproaching Edmond Adam for his hesitation to throw himself into the battle, and was inviting him to work with all his strength for the overthrow of the Bonapartes, adding, what in fact he did not believe but he thought it to his advantage to seem to profess, that no government was possible in France except a Republic. Adam then said to his wife the following memorable words which she repeats in her memoirs: "I am quite ready to work for the Republic, more and better than I have done hitherto, but what can abstentionists like ourselves do for her?" Husband and wife organised their salon as a meeting place where adherents of Republican ideas could gather together and exchange their ideas and opinions. The parties given by Thiers in his hotel in the Rue St. Georges were generally frequented by the older members of the party, whilst the younger ones assembled with Laurent Pichat; both young and old could be met in the house of Madame Adam, who, with all the charm of her lovely face and the elegance of her graceful manners, made a most delightful hostess. The first people who assembled around her were for the most part literary men like Henri Martin, Legouvé, Hetzel the editor, Gaston Paris, Bixio, Garnier-Pagès, Toussenel, Nefftzer, Texier, Challemel-Lacour, Jules Ferry, Pelletan—all men well worthy to be appreciated by her. Some are already forgotten, whilst others will never be consigned to oblivion by those who follow them on the road of life. But very soon she tried to draw towards her all the younger forces of the Republican party, concentrating her attention specially upon Gambetta. She did not, in the early days, know him, but Adam, who had met him at a dinner with Laurent Pichat, had spoken to her of him with an enthusiasm that surprised her the more because he was not generally addicted to such expansive feelings. In this con-

nection she relates with humour that she spoke to Hetzel, and asked him to bring to one of her dinners the young advocate, who had made for himself such a name already and whose reputation at the Bar was fast becoming considerable, especially since he had defended Delescluze against the government. Hetzel screamed with surprise when she proposed it, declaring that she did not know the man whom she proposed to admit at her hospitable table. Gambetta, he told her, was a vulgar, common sort of individual, blind of one eye, dirty and unkempt, with black nails, and walking about in disreputable clothes which, to add to his uncouth appearance, were never properly put on or properly fastened. Madame Adam insisted nevertheless. Her womanly instinct had guessed that if the man in question was really in possession of the genius attributed to him, it would be easy for him when once admitted in the houses of civilised people to adopt their manners and to polish his own. On the other hand, if he failed to notice the inadequacies of his first education, he would not be the man of value she had been led to think he could become, and in that case it would be easy to drop him after this first attempt at drawing him from the society with which he had hitherto associated. But she wanted to judge for herself, she persisted with Hetzel, and at last persuaded him to take her invitation to Gambetta.

The young advocate was at first very much surprised. He knew Edmond Adam, had vaguely heard he had a wife, but had never troubled to think about her much, therefore he was rather astonished to find himself the object of her attention; still he decided to go, saying at the same time to one of his friends of the Café Procope, where he generally used to spend his afternoons: "I shall accept; it will be curious to see what kind of woman Adam's bourgeoise may be."

A large and distinguished company had been asked to meet the Republican orator. Laurent Pichat, Eugène Pelletan, Challemel-Lacour, Jules Ferry, Hetzel, of course, and, lastly, the Marquis Jules de Lasteyrie, an intimate friend of Thiers and an ardent Orleanist, who, moreover, was one of the most elegant men in Paris. The latter had begged hard to be included in that dinner, as he was excessively interested in Gambetta, and having arrived a little in advance of the other guests, he said to Madame Adam that he would repeat all the incidents of the dinner to Thiers, whom he knew to be very anxious to hear his opinion about " the young monster," as he called him.

Gambetta had imagined that he was going to one of those houses where an utter absence of the conventionalities of life is the order of the day, and that consequently he would not be required, as it were, even to wash his hands before making his appearance at the hospitable board to which he had been bidden. He arrived in one of those indescribable costumes which are neither evening nor morning dress, with a waistcoat buttoned high up to the throat and a flannel shirt. He found the whole company in orthodox evening dress, and his hostess in a lovely velvet costume, out of which the most beautiful pair of shoulders were looming in their snowy whiteness. He tried to excuse himself, saying vaguely : " If I had only guessed." " You probably would have refused my invitation," replied his hostess. " It is not nice of you to say so."

Everybody felt more or less embarrassed. Lasteyrie, who was always indulgent with the extravagances of mankind, could not help whispering into Adam's ear : " If at least he had donned the blouse of the common workman, I could have forgiven him, but this kind of get up ! " And he made a gesture of despair.

# Madame Juliette Adam

No woman alive had greater tact than Madame Adam. Seeing the embarrassment of Gambetta, as well as the look of disgust with which her other guests observed him, she went up to the Marquis de Lasteyrie, and in a low voice told him that in order to try and mend matters she was going to dispossess him from the seat of honour which belonged to him by right, and to give her arm to Gambetta. "You are quite right," replied the Marquis. "If you did anything else, the servants might be tempted to forget to offer him some soup. And besides, this will allow us to see whether he understands great things and their meaning."

Juliette Lambert, to give her her pseudonym in literature, to her husband's amazement, walked up to Gambetta, and took his arm to go down to the dining-room. When they were seated, the Radical leader bent down towards her ear, and in very humble tones told her that he would never forget the lesson she had given to him in such a delicate manner. He understood the meaning of great things, and had emerged to his honour from a very trying experience.

It was, however, much later that Gambetta became a regular visitor at the house of Madame Adam. Years had passed since his first introduction to her, and poor Juliette Lambert had gone through bitter trials that had left their everlasting impress on her ardent and enthusiastic nature. The war with all its horrors, the Commune with all its terrors, had shaken her bright equanimity, and in that generous soul one feeling had taken the place of almost every other—a deep love for her poor humiliated country; a passionate desire to see her once more occupying the proud position from which fate and the mistakes of men had despoiled her. Later on, when the husband she loved so fondly was snatched away from her, and when, beside her daughter and the children of the latter, she found herself with no one to love in the

whole wide world, she attached herself to that one idea and ambition—to revenge the humiliations of 1870, to get back for that France, to whom all her energies were devoted, those provinces which she had lost, and to revenge herself on the conqueror to whom she had owed the shattering of so many of her brightest dreams.

She had always been the enemy of the Bonaparte dynasty; she could not, though she was on very good terms with several members of the Orleans family, reconcile herself to their stepping upon the throne left vacant by Napoleon III. She had always adored liberty, that of nations as well as that of individuals, and she imagined that that ideal Republic she had dreamt of could be brought into existence and would be able to give back to France her glory and prestige.

This one idea dominated all her actions and inspired all her writings. She used all the resources of her wonderful intelligence, all the activity of her remarkable mind, and all her knowledge and her experience of the world to realise it. She opened once more the doors of her salon, which had remained closed after the death of Edmond Adam, and though at the bottom of her heart an inconsolable widow, she forced herself to present to the glances of others the appearance of a woman without heartache. Everybody who approached her, even those who did not share her opinions either in politics or in intellectual and moral matters, fell under the influence of her charm, and were subjugated by her enthusiasm and her earnest, ardent words. One could see at a glance that she was sincere, true—a friend on whom one could always rely, and an enemy who would always fight loyally. Moreover, her clear mind had the faculty of looking into the future with an extraordinary perspicacity, and she seldom was mistaken in her judgments of men or facts. She it was who for the first time suggested to her friends the

possibility of an alliance with Russia, by which French prestige might be strengthened. She it was who began working for it at a time when even wise political men in both countries only smiled when such a thing was mentioned in their presence.

It has been said that she was an irreconcilable enemy of Germany. In a certain sense this was true, but there was no preconceived hatred in her feelings. She detested Germans because she had seen them trampling her unfortunate country under their feet, because she had owed to them some of the bitterest hours she had had to go through in her life. Yet she had no aversion to German culture, and could recognise the great qualities of the German race, qualities which, perhaps, gave her even more reasons to detest it. She was above everything else just. Her character had too much real greatness about it ever to give way to any mean or petty feeling, even where an enemy was concerned.

When I lived in Paris I used to see her daily. She was then at the height of her beauty and fame, and political men of all shades used to crowd to her receptions, and to bow down before her splendid grace and proud demeanour. She was considered as the real Queen of the Third Republic, and no important political measure was undertaken by any member of the government of that day without her having been consulted about its opportuneness. No one ever regretted having asked her advice or trusted to the clearness of her judgments; nor could any say that she had revealed the slightest fraction of all the secrets of state which had been confided to her.

I do not believe a more discreet person ever lived, and it is a great deal to that immense and so rare quality that she owed the influence she managed to acquire with all, without exception, who came into contact with her. I can talk about it the more easily because on several different occasions I had the opportunity to convince myself personally of her

discretion. Most certainly among her many qualities I believe it was the latter that her friends, and among them Gambetta, appreciated the most in her. The great orator had never forgotten that first dinner to which she had asked him, and later on, when the fall of the Empire had drawn them more together, he began, with discretion at first and with impetuosity at last, to consult her and to confide in her all his dreams of glory. She grew not only to like him, but to feel for him a great, deep, true affection, one of those that a woman can only experience when she has reached middle life, known what the storms of the heart mean, and, greatest joy of all, felt what it is to be everything and yet nothing in another man's life. One can boldly affirm that it was she who made Gambetta what he became in the later years of his life, that it was to her he owed the great development of his fighting qualities, as well as the great dignity of which he gave proofs in so many important questions, a dignity that in those long bygone days, when he had appeared with a flannel shirt at the first dinner given in his honour by Juliette Lambert, no one supposed he could ever attain. Gambetta, who also could very quickly discover the good and the bad sides of the people with whom he was thrown into contact, experienced in time for her a reverence such as he had never imagined he could feel for any woman in the wide world. He not only admired her mind, but he also recognised the great superiority which her culture, apart from everything else, gave her over him, and he soon turned to her to solve all his doubts, and to be advised as to all that he was to do to successfully reach the eminence to which he had aspired from the first day he arrived in Paris, a poor student, with hardly enough money in his pocket to be able to dine every day.

But, strange to say, when one thinks of the exceptional

physical advantages and charm of Madame Adam, he never for one single moment allowed himself to pay any banal attentions to her; she perhaps was not quite so devoid of a nearer feeling of attraction towards him.

In truth, Gambetta placed her so high in his thoughts that it had never occurred to him to discover that underneath the adviser and counsellor, to whom he turned for comfort and encouragement at almost every instant of his life, there could exist a fair, beautiful woman with a womanly heart and womanly feelings. He did not realise that, in associating herself with his dreams and his ambitions, she also associated with them, perhaps even unknown to herself, her own future and her own existence. Perhaps this misunderstanding, which circumstances and not their own will had created between them, influenced their relations towards the end of the life of Gambetta, but, let it be said to the honour of Madame Adam, she never allowed the ignorance of her charms in which her friend indulged to influence her friendship for him, and, with a strength of character such as very few women would have been capable of, she sacrificed herself to his future and only thought of his successes. She tried to persuade herself of the fact she had contrived long ago to impress upon others, i.e. that she was living only for her child and for her country, and that she was above everything a great patriot, "une grande française," and nothing else.

She still believed in the Republic at that period of life when I first met her. She still hoped that it would bring to her beloved France the peace and the prosperity she so passionately desired for it. Later on, however, she was destined to experience in that hope, too, some of the greatest disappointments of her whole life. For a woman with high ideals and a great moral aim, as was the case with her, nothing

could be harder to bear than the slow realisation that she had nursed a false ideal, the conviction that she had worshipped at a wrong altar. And yet this great trial was not spared to her who had already suffered so much. Little by little the scales had fallen from her eyes, and she discovered that personal ambitions, personal greed, and personal intrigues flourish just as much and just as well, and perhaps even more, under a republic than under a monarchy. She saw that humanity remains unchangeable, whilst things undergo many transformations, that bad passions never die, and that good and virtuous people are always the victims of those who are their inferiors in moral worth.

I remember one evening that I happened to be alone with Gambetta, at about the time that he became Prime Minister, we discussed together Madame Adam. He spoke of her with feelings not only of reverence, but also with an admiration the more remarkably expressed in that it was done without the usual enthusiasm which he generally displayed when talking about things or people who were near to his heart. He told me that but for her he would certainly never have reached to the political eminence on which he found himself. We were old friends, and I could allow myself to touch upon delicate subjects with him; so I ventured to ask him whether the beauty of Juliette Lambert had ever made an impression on him. He replied without the slightest hesitation that he had never thought about it, so perfectly superior she had appeared to him, intellectually, and so entirely he had put her upon a pedestal whence he had never once thought that she could come down. I asked him then brutally why the thought of the great things he could have achieved together with her, had he made of her the companion of his life, had never struck him. Gambetta looked at me very closely, then after a few moments of silence softly said: "I would

never have dared to allow my thoughts to rest upon that idea, I know myself but too well, and I would not have had the courage to make her unhappy. Believe me, that woman would never suffer more from anything than from the loss of her illusions, and she sees in me the man she has created, not the man that in reality I am."

I have often thought of these words, of the great Republican leader, especially when in later years, long after he had entered into eternal rest, I saw Madame Adam once again on my return to Paris after a long absence. A great transformation had taken place in her. She had witnessed that loss of her illusions to which her friend had referred, and suffered from it just as he had foreshadowed. She had seen her beloved France not able to come out of the mesh of intrigues and miseries into which the man who by the force of events had become ruler had entangled France, and she had realised that her conception of a Republic, such as she had dreamt of, was an impossibility; that it is not by changing its form of government a nation rises to greatness and glory. She had been obliged to assist, powerless to avert it, the destruction of all the plans which she had made together with those men who had been her friends, and among whom so many had become her adversaries, according as the gulf of the opinions that had come to divide them had grown broader and broader. She had experienced that grief which is so very acute to a warm, womanly heart such as hers, of finding that she had no longer the power to influence those who formerly had cherished the same high ideals that in that beautiful world her imagination had conjured she had placed before everything else.

Death, too, had robbed her of much that she had leaned upon, both in France and abroad; she had undergone those fiery trials out of which noble souls emerge greater,

nobler, more valiant and splendid than before, but under the weight of which vulgar natures are destroyed. After all these moral struggles and inward battles she had acquired even more courage, more indulgence, more charity, and more faith in the Infinite, and in an Eternity to which perhaps she had not given much attention in the days of her youth, when the world was at her feet and sovereigns bowed before her inimitable grace. To these consolations her tired, weary soul turned when everything else had failed her. The transformation that has taken place in the personality of Juliette Lambert is one of those phenomena that, when met with, remains always the subject of the deepest admiration on the part of those who have watched the change come about, and have followed its various phases.

Politics, that used to be the all-engrossing subject in the life of Madame Adam, have now dropped to the second plane, and purely intellectual subjects engross her more. Her affection for her beloved France, though it remains still the one absorbing passion of her life, is no longer expressed by the old wild desire to see France revenged upon her enemies. Her patriotism has assumed proportions that give it more earnestness, more steadfastness, and thus it makes the greater impression on others, and carries an authority that passion, when expressed violently, can never attain. She has obliged strangers to respect her patriotism, and to see her in that graver, sober light which alone is worthy of the great patriot that she has always been, of the woman who in success as well as in disaster has never despaired of the resources of her country, nor of its power to arise, stronger and more powerful than it was before, out of disaster and ruin, and, worse evil than any other, out of the intrigues of unscrupulous men who want to use her, in order to further their own greed or their own gain.

With that difference Juliette Lambert in her old age has remained what she was in her youth, a noble, charming woman, kind and affectionate, with the warmest of hearts and the most generous character. She lives mostly in the country, in a dear old house, formerly a cloister in those olden times when a king reigned over France. L'Abbaye du Val de Gyf, as it is called, is one of those lovely dwellings where everything speaks of peace and rest, and of the high soul and earnest mind of its owner. There, among her books and her roses, and her dogs and her birds, she lives in quietness, and spends her days thinking of the past, and writing her wonderful reminiscences. There her friends come and see her, as often as she allows them to do so, there one of her best loved friends, the unfortunate Queen Amélie of Portugal, has often fled for consolation, because the closest intimacy unites the fiery Republican and the daughter of the Bourbons. There Madame Adam forgets her disillusions, and thinks only of the good things which life has left her.

The last time I saw her in her beautiful home at Gyf we talked about old times, and all those hopes of the great things which we both had expected out of the Franco-Russian alliance. She frankly owned to me that it had not realised the great hopes that she had trusted it would, and rather bitterly remarked that "things we yearn after very much never turn out quite like we have expected they will when they come to be realised. But then," she added with a shade of malice, "how very seldom do we see what we wish for realised in general?"

And thus I take leave of her, after an acquaintance that stretches over more than a quarter of a century, the same loving, delightful, clever and kind woman that she has always been, with her serene smile, and grave, serious eyes that have always looked upon humanity through the windows of her

soul, and never through the spectacles of envy, hatred, or any of those bad feelings that most human beings indulge in. An exception she has always stood amongst women, and an exception she will remain for all those who later on, even when she too has disappeared from this mortal scene, will read about her, and think what a noble, beautiful creature she has always proved herself to be.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A Few Literary Men

During the many years which I spent in Paris I had numerous opportunities of meeting the majority of the remarkable literary men who abounded in France towards the end of last century. Since then their number has considerably decreased, indeed it is very much to be doubted whether the great thinkers, such as Taine, Renan, Guizot, or Thiers, have ever been replaced.

I knew Renan intimately, and wish I could describe him as he deserves. To hear certain people speak of the author of the "Origines du Christianisme" one would think that he was a ferocious hater, not only of religion, but also of everything that approached it. In reality Renan was intensely religious. Few people have understood so fully the beauties of the moral preached by Christ, and few people have had more reverence for the sacred individuality of the Saviour of mankind. He tried to imitate Him in all the actions of his life, to be, like Him, kind and indulgent and compassionate for the woes of the world. From his sojourn in the seminary of St. Sulpice, he had kept the demeanour and the manners of a Catholic priest, and do what he could, that atmosphere clung to him.

But he had a quality which many clericals fail to possess, a very clear insight into religious matters, and the faculty of being able to set aside what was superstition, and retaining

what could be kept of the poetry that attaches to the teachings of the different churches that divide the world. He always sought truth, and never rested until he thought he had found it, but he never gave out his own ideas as perfect ones, nor tried to impose them upon others. His was essentially an impartial and a tolerant mind. Indeed his thoughts were so constantly directed towards those regions where it is to be hoped eternal truth exists, that he did not believe it worth while to assume an intolerance which I do not think he could ever have felt, no matter in what circumstances nor under what provocation. I have never met a man more indifferent to criticisms directed against his person or his works, and I remember once when a very bitter article concerning his book, "La Vie de Jésus," had been brought to his notice, he merely smiled and quietly said: "Why do you think I must be angry at this? Isn't every one entitled to have an opinion of his own?"

This book, so wonderful in its simplicity, among all those which he had written, was the one he cared for the most, partly because he had composed it in collaboration with his sister, Henriette Renan, who had such a singular influence over his life, and who was as remarkable a personality as himself. During the journey which they had undertaken together in the Holy Land, they had thought about the book which they wanted to write. In his "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse," Renan recognises that the person who had had the greatest influence over his mind had been his sister, and he walked in the road her footsteps had trodden until he also saw the great Light after which they had both longed so much. In speaking about him, one could use with justice the words he applied to his sister when he wrote that "though noble lives haven't the need to be remembered by anyone else than God, one must

nevertheless try to fix their image in the minds of the generations that come after them."

I am thinking about these words as I am now remembering all the conversations we had together, and the patience with which he explained to me all the various points I asked him to develop. He was patience personified; he never regarded anything trouble when, by inconvenience to himself, he could be useful to others. His conversations were always instructive, always attractive, and always worth listening to, even when they strayed on to frivolous subjects, which he often liked to touch. It must not be supposed that Renan was a grave philosopher who did not care for the congenial or the pleasant, or the amusing things which happen in life. He could enjoy mirth like, and with the frankness of, a child.

His works have been discussed more perhaps than those of most writers of his time, and though they have left a deep impress upon the minds of serious people, no one who has read them can say that their influence has been anything else but to good. The image that he has drawn for us of the person of Christ is so pure, so noble, so entirely religious, that even those who object to the way in which he has presented it cannot but be attracted by the image that his pen has evoked.

However strange it may seem to say so, Renan himself was more surprised than anyone else to find he had written a work which evoked so many criticisms. He had been so entirely absorbed by his subject that he had never given a thought to anything else but the picture of the Redeemer, such as it had presented itself to him, in the spot which had seen Him work and die. He had never intended publishing a book of controversy, and in presence of the storm which it provoked he was even more astounded than sorry. It was not in his nature to be angry, and regret was impossible

for a soul like his, which only performed what it thought and firmly believed to be right.

Contrary to the feeling some express about him, Renan had never indulged in atheistic opinions, and he strongly condemned and opposed those who supported them. His belief and faith in a Supreme Being were as firm as they were sincere, and he only deplored that his convictions had not allowed him to remain a son of the Catholic Church, in which in his youth he had hoped to become a priest. Her teachings had left their impress upon his soul, and directed it towards the deeper studies in which he became absorbed.

Renan had married a woman well worthy of him, and who made him a wonderful helpmate. She knew how to smooth all difficulties from his path, and proved well fitted for her difficult position as the wife of one of the greatest thinkers of modern times. She was an accomplished hostess. To the evening parties which saw their friends assembled in their little home in the Rue de l'Observatoire, she gave the impress of her own charming personality, and presided over the conversations with immense tact and dignity. Their daughter, who married a professor at the Sorbonne, M. Psichari, a Greek by origin, continued the traditions left to her by her parents, and until lately had a literary salon, which was well known in Paris. I do not know whether it still exists or not.

Renan was extremely ugly; this has been repeated too often for anyone not to be aware of it. But a more attractive face than he possessed is not easily to be found. There was such kindness in his smile, in the look of his eyes, and such intelligence in that large head with its noble brow, that one could not help being struck by it, and admiring it far more than if it had indeed been a beautiful face. The painter Bonnat has made a portrait of him that is, I think, the best

one that has ever come from his brush. It shows Renan as he really was; one has only got to look at it, and the original appears as we, who knew him well, saw him sitting in his deep arm-chair, with his head slightly bent down on his chest, and the expressive countenance that used to brighten up whenever he met a friend, or heard about some noble deed such as he himself would have liked to perform. It was impossible to know him and not to admire the man in him, even more, perhaps, than the great thinker or the great writer, because, after all, intellect or genius can be met sooner than real virtue or real goodness—and Renan was essentially good.

From Renan to Taine is not a far step, and somehow it seems to me that the latter's name is the only one worthy to be pronounced immediately after that of my old friend and master. I have also known Taine well, met him often, and always been struck by his large, wide mind, so utterly devoid of prejudices, and at the same time so absolute in the judgments which he thought he had the right to formulate. I must emphasise the words, "which he thought he had the right," because those judgments assume the intelligence as well as the moral personality of Hippolyte Taine. He was an historian before everything else, perhaps even before he was a critic, though he counts among the greatest that French literature has seen; but his inclinations led him before everything else towards the study of the past, and of the causes that had brought about the great transformations that the world has witnessed, ever since society in the sense we understand it to-day began to exist; and whilst trying to fathom these causes he slowly came to convictions, which he never would renounce when once he thought them justified. Nothing would move him to change one line in the writings which, after due consideration, he decided to publish, and even his long friendship with the Princesse Mathilde did not influence

him in describing Napoleon in any other sense than the one in which he had understood that colossal figure. The story goes that after having read the study which he first gave to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, she sent him her card with "p.p.c." written on it, a hint which he took, and as is known everywhere, their intercourse of many years came to an end.

Taine used to spend the greater part of the year at Menthon, in Savoy, on the borders of the Lake of Annecy, and it was during a visit which I paid to him there, from Aix-les-Bains where I was undergoing a cure, that I had with him the longest and perhaps the most interesting conversation in the whole time of our intercourse with each other. We discussed many subjects, and among others his great work, the "Origines de la France Contemporaine." He told me how he had begun it with the intention of stopping after the first two volumes devoted to the *Ancien Régime*, and how gradually the subject had taken hold of him and he had come to the conclusion that he must develop it, and bring it to the point which he considered to be the only right one for properly understanding the immense and terrible drama of the Revolution. He hated anarchy, he thought it his duty to show it up in all its vivid horror, and he tried to write the story of that tragedy with the same impartiality he would have brought to bear on the description of it in any other country than his own. As he told me on that day: "C'est un pauvre patriotisme que celui qui s'imagine que l'on doit excuser les crimes de son pays, simplement par ce qu'on en est un citoyen ("It is a poor kind of patriotism which imagines that it must excuse the crimes of its own country, simply because one is born a citizen").

With this direction of mind it is not to be wondered that, though admired by many, Taine was merely liked by

the few. He could not be complaisant to the illusions or the false idols of the crowd, and he repudiated all that he called in his expressive language, " les exagérations d'ignorants qui se croient instruits " (" the exaggerations of ignoramuses who believe themselves learned "). He was a philosopher in his way, though it was entirely a personal philosophy which was founded on his own experience rather than on the teachings of those who had preceded him on the road of life and knowledge. Living most of his time far away from Paris, he was, according to the words of Balzac, one of those great minds " which solitude had preserved from all worldly meannesses." Left face to face with the magnificences of Nature, he had acquired some of its impassivity before the woes of mankind, and in his judgments of events he often forgot the tears and the sorrows, and the blood out of which they had developed.

Renan was a soft and kind moralist, Taine was an inexorable thinker, Dumas Fils was the type of the sceptical worldly philosopher who hastens to follow the advice of Figaro, that it is better to laugh at some things for fear of being obliged to cry over them. Anything more sparkling than his conversation it would be difficult to describe, anything more amusing than the paradoxes which he loved to develop has never been met with. But with it all there was also about that charming, delightful man a strong leaning towards the tendency to moralise, and to pose as a moralist. Indeed he might, perhaps, have become a moralist in fact, had his rambling, sharp mind allowed him to think about moral problems otherwise than in associating them with his " bons mots." These constitute the great attraction of his plays, and give to some of them that bitter flavour which, in spite of all the wit displayed in the dialogue, hangs about their whole construction.

In his sadly truthful comedy, "La Visite de Noces," the analysis which he makes there of the great fact, which especially in France has absorbed so much of public attention, the fact of love outside marriage, is certainly full of ingenious reasonings. But though it strikes the mind, it does not appeal to the heart of those who listen to it, because it is not with witty phrases that a social evil can be mended. However, this last fact did not disturb the equanimity of Alexandre Dumas. He did not pose as an apostle, and he knew very well that principles fall down very easily before the strength of passion aroused. He had no hopes of curing the evils of mankind, but it amused him to satirise them, and to laugh at them, and to talk of them, and he did perhaps more than any other writer of his generation to acclimatise society to the fact of the existence of many things, which until he made them popular had never been mentioned—in the society of ladies at least.

Alexandre Dumas was married to a Russian, a very intelligent and, in her youth, a very attractive woman, but who, towards the end of her life, developed slatternly habits. Those who called upon her unawares found her with her hair wrapped up in curl-papers, her face seldom washed, and in an untidy dressing-gown, the garment she most affected. I remember one morning at Dieppe, where the clever dramatist had a villa, I found her sitting in her garden overlooking the sea, in a kind of white wrapper, none too fresh, and without any stockings on her feet. When lunch was announced Dumas turned to his wife and asked her whether she would not tidy herself up a bit, to which she replied with indifference: "Why, I am all right." To watch her husband shrug his shoulders was a sight in itself.

Two daughters were born to M. and Mme. Dumas. The eldest married a banker, Maurice Lippmann, with whom she

*Photo: H. Manuel, Paris.*

MADAME JULIETTE ADAM

*Photo: Pierre Petit, Paris.*

ALEX. DUMAS (Père)

*Photo: H. Manuel, Paris.*

ANATOLE FRANCE

*Photo: Gerschel, Paris.*

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could not agree, and a divorce soon followed. Colette Dumas was a pretty, wild kind of creature, gifted with a charm quite her own, and absolutely devoid of what is commonly called moral sense. She had never been baptised, and she was never brought up, but simply grew as she liked, mostly in her father's study, where she heard expounded the whole time the theories after which she tried later on to shape her own life. There was no harm about her, but, alas, no principles ever ruled her conduct, and a more lovely little animal never existed. The poor girl discovered later on that life was not the comedy she had been led to think it, and before she died a few years ago she must have often regretted the false education that she had received, and lamented the views which she had taken of existence, which to her youthful eyes had appeared in the light of one great enjoyment.

Her sister Jeannine was quite a different character, as sedate as Colette was hasty, and with strong common sense instead of passionate cravings after the impossible. She was married to an officer belonging to the old aristocracy, and she knew very well how to adapt herself to her new existence in the provincial town where she settled, and where, like all happy people, she had no history.

At the time I am writing the description, the Goncourts were talked about a great deal in French literary circles. I have attended receptions at their house, but I never could share the enthusiasm that some of their writings excited among the general public. They were both clever, Jules the more so of the two, but though they showed themselves very hard workers, one can well question the use their work has proved to the development of the intellectual capacities of their contemporaries. It is very much to be doubted whether their books will survive them for any considerable time. One thing is certain, they were the first to start the school of

self-admiration that now reigns so completely over French modern literature.

Of quite a different type was the Comte de Falloux, a member of the Academy, and a writer of no mean talent. The Comte was just as well known for his political as for his literary activity, and he represented in the Chamber of Deputies, and afterwards in the Senate, the Legitimist party, of which he was one of the leaders, and where his opinion carried much weight. M. de Falloux was an Ultramontane of the purest water, who always looked towards Rome for his inspirations, and who saw nothing good outside the Pope and the Jesuits. He was a great favourite among a certain coterie of the Faubourg St. Germain, and though a great friend of Mgr. Dupanloup, the famous Bishop of Orleans, used always to quarrel with him, and thought him far too liberal and too leniently inclined towards compromise, his own stern, obstinate nature never accepting any. He was extremely well read, but he was not an amiable man, and certainly was not sympathetic. He was a man of letters belonging to that school of grand seigneurs of which the Duc de Broglie and the Duc d'Audiffret Pasquier were such brilliant examples.

Though I shall speak later on about M. Zola when discussing the Dreyfus case, which is so entirely associated with his name, yet I must also here say a few words concerning him. In the 'eighties—the period to which I am referring—he had already made a great name for himself as the father of the new Naturalistic school. Whether he had directed his attention that way because he really believed that fictional literature, such as it had been understood until he arrived to transform it, was based on false principles I cannot say. Perhaps he simply wanted to make more money in trying to offer to the public something that hitherto it had

not seen, and which was bound to interest it by its unexpectedness if by nothing else. But what I can certify through personal knowledge of the man is that he had enough vanity to prefer being hissed than passed by in silence. That he had considerable talent no one can deny, but that he might have used it in a different direction is also not to be questioned. One effect of his style was to turn the heads of would-be authors, who, not having the necessary capabilities to write a good book, imagined that by imitating Zola, and scribbling plots of questionable taste, they would likewise rise to fame, and, what was still better, earn fortune, forgetting entirely that talent such as Zola possessed could allow itself a latitude which people with fewer capabilities were better advised not to attempt.

M. Zola married a very superior and most intelligent woman, who was gifted with most remarkable qualities of heart and mind. She showed extraordinary dignity, and most uncommon forbearance in regard to her husband, whose memory to this day she tries to defend against any possible attack. When he died she took to her heart two children of which he was the father, and brought them up, and established them in the world with a total abnegation of her own personal feelings. Indeed, Madame Zola's conduct in life, even under the most trying circumstances, must always be admired. She certainly was far superior to her husband in regard to moral character, and she is liked and esteemed by all those who have had the privilege of meeting and knowing her.

In thus recounting the literary men I have met with in Paris I find I have forgotten to mention Alphonse Daudet, with his leonine countenance and his black locks. And yet I knew him better than I did Zola, was a frequent visitor at his house, and a great admirer of his amiable and clever

wife, who has since also made a name for herself in the world of letters. Daudet was an extremely capricious man, and one whose temper was of the same character, but his abilities were incontestable, and some of his books will very probably outlive those of Zola. When he happened to be entirely in good health, which unfortunately was not often the case in the last years of his life, Daudet was a most pleasant companion, full of conversation, and possessing the French spirit of "le mot pour rire." I remember he made us roar one afternoon by relating to us how once he had received an anonymous letter, in which he was asked, in case he was "tall, fair, with blue eyes, and wore a pink tie," to come to a rendezvous in the garden of the Tuileries. The writer obligingly added that unless he fulfilled these conditions in his personal appearance, and consented to put on a pink tie, he had better not waste his time by coming, as the lady who wanted to make his acquaintance was determined to do so only if he fulfilled the ideal she had nursed for long years. It seemed that the ideal in question depended for a great part on the pink tie.

Alphonse Daudet left two sons and a daughter. Leon Daudet, his eldest boy, has also written psychological books, but they evince none of his father's wit. He also has made himself conspicuous by his political vagaries, and his divorce from the granddaughter of Victor Hugo, which, owing to certain rather strange circumstances connected with it, caused considerable scandal. He is a fervent Catholic, but having, out of consideration to the feelings of the Hugo family, consented to be married only at the mairie, without the help of the Church, he had the bad taste to say publicly, when he married again, that his first marriage had not been legal, which, of course, was severely commented upon even by his best friends. His brother, Lucien Daudet, is a mild young

man, who has also literary ambitions, and whose principal occupation consists in attendance on the Empress Eugénie, whom he has attempted to describe in a little volume that could not have been pleasant reading for the Empress, because nobody gifted with common sense likes to be turned into a perfection and a genius rolled into one, or whilst still alive to be subjected to such extravagant praise. The youngest brother of Alphonse Daudet, Ernest Daudet, is also a writer, who has given his attention principally to historic subjects. His books are all worth reading, if a little dull, and he is a great favourite in the salons of the Faubourg St. Germain, where his monarchical opinions have won him an entrance.

I wish I had more space at my disposal to mention otherwise than in passing Jules Claretie, the late Director of the Comédie Française, and the author of so many charming novels, which mostly can be put into everybody's hands. Many people did not like him, but those who knew him well have always felt great sympathy for him. He wrote the French language as no one else perhaps, with a light, pleasant, vivid style that at once conveyed to the reader the author's thoughts and his way of looking upon things. For years before his death in 1914 he wrote a delightful weekly chronicle for the *Temps*, called "La vie à Paris," which will certainly be consulted later on by all who wish to learn the social history of Paris of the period.

## CHAPTER XIX

### The 16th of May and the Fall of Marshal MacMahon

When, after the fall of M. Thiers, the Duc de Magenta was elected second President of the Third Republic, it was generally understood, as I have mentioned already, that he would only be the representative of a transitional government, and that, accepting the tacit conditions under which he had been appointed, he would contribute all the weight of his authority to secure the return of France to the flag of the old Monarchy.

But Marshal MacMahon, when he became Head of the State, did not show the slightest disposition to enter into that scheme. Not only did he disappoint the party which had voted for him, because it had believed that he would be an instrument in its hands, but he showed strong sympathies for the Left side of that Assembly which had overthrown the previous President more out of pique than anything else. He took ministers holding opinions directly in contradiction to those which he himself had been supposed to profess, and when at last, in November, 1873, the Comte de Chambord arrived secretly at Versailles, as I have already related, and asked the Marshal to grant him a secret interview during which the political situation was to be discussed, the latter refused, with the hypocritical words that, though he was quite ready to sacrifice his life for the Prince, he could not do the dishonourable thing that was asked of him.

It was that word " dishonourable " that upset the Comte de Chambord. Himself the soul of honour, he could not

but be affronted by the supposition that he could have had the intention to ask from the Duc de Magenta anything that could have compromised his loyalty as a man or as a soldier. I believe this had more than any other thing to do with the discouragement that made him seize the pretext of his white flag in order to renounce his pretensions to the throne of his ancestors. A good many years later, talking about Marshal MacMahon at Frohsdorf, he told me that " C'est un imbécile, et ce qui est pire, c'est un ambitieux, qui ne veut pas se l'avouer, et qui cherche à dissimuler ce sentiment sous le grand mot de son honneur " (" He is an imbecile, and what is worse, he has ambition, which he doesn't want to own, and tries to hide under those great words, ' his honour ' ").

I don't think anyone ever made a more scathing and more true appreciation of the character of the Marshal than the last descendant of the Bourbons when he voiced that judgment.

Once the possibility of a monarchical restoration was put aside, and especially after the Prince Imperial had fallen in Zululand, by which the Bonapartists were reduced to impotence, it seemed as if the Republic was to be the only possible government in France.

I was in Paris when the heir of the Napoleons ended his short existence so gloriously and so tragically, and I do not think that I heard one single person doubt that this Republican regime was certain to last.

Until then great hopes had existed, even among the former enemies of the Empire, that the young Prince would be able, by one of those freaks of political life which occur so often in the existence of nations, to step once more upon the throne from which his father had been overthrown. He was supposed to possess courage, cleverness, great steadfastness of character, strong principles, and an ardent love for

his country. That alone constituted certain guarantees for the future.

The Orleanists knew very well that until the country had altogether forgotten the incident of their claiming back their confiscated millions at a moment when the country was smarting under the unparallelled disaster of 1870, they had no chance of being called back to power. The Comte de Chambord had made himself impossible; the Republic was acceptable to but very few; the Prince Imperial had therefore the possibility if not the probability of returning to France as its Emperor, and this solution was wished for even by people who, before the war and the changes which it had brought about, would have recoiled with horror at the idea of being thought supporters of the Bonapartes. But when fate intervened, and the tragedy which was enacted in Africa put an end to all hopes and calculations that had been made, it became evident that the country must resign itself to a Republican government. And I am persuaded that apart from the ardent Monarchists, who fought for a principle more than for a dynasty, every reasonable person in France thought so.

The whole situation rested on the fact that in the opinion of many, the Republic ought to be essentially Conservative, whilst in that of others, who were gradually to increase in number, its first duty was to show itself distinctly Radical, and determined to follow the glorious principles, as they were qualified, of 1789.

The Duc de Magenta, who found himself in a certain sense called upon to decide between these two currents, did not very well know what to do. His own leanings were distinctly Conservative, and he was no admirer of the Radical programme, scarcely even of the moderate Republican one. Nevertheless he imagined that he could have the necessary

authority to appoint ministers of moderate views. There were still men of great valour in their midst, like M. Buffet and M. Dufaure, not to speak of the Duc d'Audiffret Pasquier, who had made a name for himself by his famous speech against Napoleon III. in the first National Assembly, nor of the Duc de Broglie, to whose help the Marshal was to have recourse later on. There were soldiers like General Changarnier and General Chanzy, who had fought so valiantly whilst in command of that army of the Loire which had made the last effort to free France from the victorious Prussians; politicians like M. Ribot, whose austerity and loyalty of principles have never to this day been doubted. There were also, even in the ranks of the Left, men like Leon Say, whose presence in a ministry was in itself a guarantee that it would never yield to the demands of the extreme Socialists, or like Gambetta, who, whatever can be said against him, was a great patriot, incapable of imperilling the existence of his country by an alliance with anarchism. Any man blessed with the slightest common sense, and possessed of frankness in his dealings with his colleagues, which unfortunately for him Marshal MacMahon never showed, might have consolidated the Republic by making use of these various elements. He was unable to do so, however, and went on from blunder to blunder, from concession to concession, reminding one of no one so much as Louis XVI., who also accepted everything and reconciled himself to nothing.

When the vote of the Chamber had made Jules Simon President of the Cabinet, Marshal MacMahon might easily have found in him an ally and a supporter in his wish to establish the Republic upon bases which would have strengthened the position of France in the eyes of Europe.

Jules Simon was a man of high principles, unsullied honour, a thinker, a writer, a philosopher, of austere life and strong

convictions—one who was not guilty of meanness nor permitted himself anything base. He was a staunch Republican, a sincere Liberal, a true follower of whatever was good and great in the Revolution of 1789; he abhorred excesses and extravagances, no matter in what shape or under what colours they presented themselves.

When he became Prime Minister he tried earnestly and sincerely, as his duty, to convert the President of the Republic to his views. These he was convinced would conciliate the different parties that divided the Chamber of Deputies, as well as the Senate, and if he had found the help he sought from the Head of the State, it is probable that the whole tide of events in France would have taken a different turn. But that help failed him, and after having on the 15th of May parted from Marshal MacMahon on the best of terms, and received from him the assurance that he would do his best to co-operate with him in the direction which he wanted to give to the government of the country, Jules Simon was startled by receiving the next morning the famous letter from the President of the Republic, refusing to lend himself to his plans. He replied by handing in his resignation.

It is to the honour of Jules Simon that whenever he discussed the event in later years he always refused to accuse the Duc de Magenta of duplicity, as many in his place would have done. When the electoral campaign began, he, of course, took an important part in it, but even then his attitude in regard to the Marshal was most correct, and he never allowed himself to say a word that might have been construed in the light of personal animosity. He was a real philosopher, and a political man to whom no suspicion had ever been attached. In France such are rare, and the example he gave must not be forgotten.

The Marshal called to his help men belonging to the

Extreme Right, such as the Duc de Broglie and M. de Fourtoul. He could hardly have done anything else, because it is not likely that even a moderate Republican would have cared to risk the unpopularity that was bound to follow all those who had taken part in this mad venture. They accepted office only because they imagined that by dissolving the Chambers the elections might give them a majority which would have called back the Orleans to the throne and restored the Monarchy.

People who knew the Duc de Broglie well affirm that he put the condition quite clearly to the Duc de Magenta, and told him that he would enter the ministry only if he were given a free hand as regards the future in case the country supported him by sending his followers to represent it in the new Chamber.

Whether this is true or not I have not had the means of discovering, but long after the death of Marshal MacMahon, his widow one day allowed a word to escape her which might have been taken as a tacit acknowledgment of the fact. She was conversing with a friend about the events that had accompanied and followed the *coup d'état* of the 16th of May, and replying to a remark that friend made to the effect that very probably had it succeeded the Duc de Magenta would have remained President of the Republic until his death, she exclaimed: "Oh no, my dear, the 16th of May, even if it had been successful, would not have kept us at the Elysée."

Had MacMahon possessed a scrap of dignity he would have resigned after the country had pronounced itself against him, and the obstinacy with which he clung to his place after his defeat is one of the most extraordinary happenings in the history of modern France. I have often wondered, and have not been the only one to do so, what he had hoped to gain by staying discredited and despised at a post which

could hardly have been a bed of roses. Duty had nothing to do with it. It might have been his duty to listen to Jules Simon, at least his constitutional duty; it certainly was not to his advantage that after having ignominiously failed in carrying through his attempt to create a Monarchical Republic, he remained the head of a Radical one.

Gambetta, whose verdict was nearly always right and just, when he troubled to utter it seriously respecting men and things, once defined the Marshal, and did so perhaps even better than the Comte de Chambord had done. When asked to what motive he attributed his having remained at his post "envers et contre tous," he replied simply: "Il est resté, parce qu'il n'a pas compris qu'il devait s'en aller" ("He remained because he did not understand that he ought to go").

But when the Senatorial elections took place, and sent to the Upper Chamber the same majority that already existed in the Lower Chamber, even an intelligence as obtuse as that of Marshal MacMahon understood that he had better leave to others the task of governing the Republic. He retired much too late for his personal dignity, and with him the last hopes of a Conservative Republic disappeared for ever. After some discussions, M. Jules Grévy was elected his successor. Some other names had been put forward, amongst them M. de Freycinet. M. Jules Ferry was also mentioned, who was to go down to posterity as the author, later, of that famous Article 7, which was so strongly opposed by the clergy and all the parties in the Chamber, with the exception of the Radical and extreme Republican parties. He was certainly a statesman of broad views. Moreover he was honest and sincere, and his personality was highly respected; but he did not care to become an automaton as was desirable in a President of a constitutional Republic. On the other hand, he was so in-

tensely disliked by all those whom he had contrived to wound by his political attitude that he was very soon eliminated from the list. As for M. de Freycinet, a clever, quiet, resolute individual, his opponents dreaded his great abilities, and perhaps also the subtlety of his reasonings. He had just enough friends to praise and to propose him, but not a sufficient number to ensure his election. After a few hours' discussion the general choice fell on M. Jules Grévy as Chief Magistrate of France.

M. Grévy was an advocate of Besançon, who had signally distinguished himself by more or less violent attacks against the Empire. He was not a brilliant man, but one gifted with strong common sense, an orator of no mean value, but whose eloquence was cold and quiet, like his whole character. He disdained to appeal to the passions of the crowd. He had the reputation of being an honest man in the full sense of the word, one who would never have consented to any indelicacy, and who represented the perfect type of the French bourgeois of the time of Louis Philippe, when the lust for luxury and the hunt after notoriety had not yet invaded public life.

When the first National Assembly gathered together at Bordeaux after the war, he was unanimously elected President, and in the delicate functions of that position he showed great dignity, singular impartiality, and firmness combined with extreme politeness. His task was excessively difficult, and no one did anything to lighten it, so that, after an incident of a personal nature by which he thought himself wounded, he sent in his resignation. It was accepted with alacrity by the Right, which feared that he would be an obstacle to its plans and intentions, and which, dreaming already of the fall of M. Thiers, was desirous of having a President after its own heart, which it found in M. Buffet, the irreconcilable enemy of Grévy.

But when Marshal MacMahon had at last made up his mind to retire, and when the various candidates had been eliminated for one reason or another, the name of M. Jules Grévy immediately met with sympathy, and he was elected by common consent. He made a good chief of a Democratic State—dignified, calm, gifted with tact, and animated by the most sincere desire to govern according to the wishes of the majority that had elected him. He brought with him to the Elysée the manners of the bourgeoisie to which he belonged, proved hostile to everything that savoured of ostentation and luxury, and went on living the same life he had led at Besançon, when, as a young advocate, he had had to fight his way in the world. Madame Grévy was also an excellent woman, a good mother and an exemplary wife, who mended her husband's socks and never attempted to meddle in matters that did not concern her. Under her rule festivities were but rare at the Elysée, but charity was practised on a large scale. M. Grévy did not show himself the nonentity he was later on represented to be, and several of his ministers, with whom I had an opportunity of discussing the President, told me that his advice always proved most valuable to them, and that, whenever serious matters came to the front, his strong common sense and clear judgment generally found the best way to put an end to the difficulties which had arisen. He was not a genius, but he had statesmanlike views, and these, more than once, proved useful to France.

Unfortunately, M. Grévy survived himself, politically speaking. Had he retired at the end of his first seven years he would have been remembered with gratitude by his country as well as by his family. But several untoward events and scandals gave a sad celebrity to his term of office.

One was the affair of the Union Générale; the first

and the last attempt of French aristocracy to meddle with finance. Since that time it has grown wiser, and has had nothing more to do with banks, except marrying bankers' daughters. But under the Presidency of M. Grévy it hoped to make up for its defeat in the field of politics by securing a great triumph in the field of finance. In M. Bontoux it thought it had found the man capable of retrieving its fallen fortunes, and almost all the proudest names of France co-operated in the enterprise which he started, and which he fondly hoped would rival the power of the Rothschilds and of Jewish finance in general. For some little time everything went well, and the shares of the Union Générale rose out of all proportion. Then one fine day the end came suddenly and crushingly, M. Bontoux was imprisoned, and all the numerous enterprises of which he had been the promoter suffered disaster.

Later on somehow, in other hands, the venture proved prosperous, and his creditors recovered something like ninety per cent. of their money. But at the moment that the catastrophe occurred half France was ruined by it, and as of course the Jews were accused of having brought it about, I think I am not much mistaken in saying that it is from that period that anti-Semitism began to flourish in the country, and that people like Drumont became popular.

The crash of the Union Générale and the Panama scandal, which began to ooze out among the public, would have been enough to throw a shadow on the Presidency of M. Grévy, but the drama which closed it stamped it with a shame that he himself did not deserve, and which, whatever has been said about it by his enemies, he felt acutely.

As everybody knows, Mademoiselle Grévy, the President's only daughter, had married Daniel Wilson, the son of a very rich sugar refiner, who in the merry days of the Empire had

formed part of that *jeunesse dorée*, whom the Café Anglais still remembers. He had grown bald, and he had become poorer since those halcyon days ; but he had a sister, Madame Pelouze, the owner of the lovely château of Chenonceaux, in the valley of the Loire, who had considerable influence over him, and who imagined that by arranging a marriage between him and the daughter of the President of the Republic he would retrieve his fallen fortunes. Daniel Wilson listened to her, and soon found himself installed at the Elysée.

Once there, the rest was easy for a man of his intelligence, and this is a quality that his most bitter adversaries concede to him. He soon acquired unbounded influence on the mind of his father-in-law, and M. Grévy, grown old and perhaps even lazy, was very glad to find in his son-in-law a person capable of helping him and of bringing to his notice many things which he might perhaps have otherwise forgotten, as well as to give him good advice when he needed it. Very soon M. Wilson became a political power, and this brought him many friends, even more flatterers, and a host of demands. At first he was careful, then he grew bolder, at last he quite forgot that he was at the mercy of the least indiscretion, and finally, when it became known that he had accepted monetary considerations in return for promotions in the Order of the Legion of Honour, the scandal became so immense that poor M. Grévy, who had known nothing at all about it, was peremptorily asked to resign his functions as Head of the State.

To those who read of this now, the whole affair cannot but appear strange, especially if they have followed the course of events in France since that day, and they can but wonder at the sensitiveness of public feeling then. To-day, when almost everything from the great Cross of the Legion of Honour down to a modest *bureau de tabac* is to be had for money

in France—and quite recently rumour spreads to the other side of the channel—one can only grieve for poor M. Grévy that he had been born too soon, and had not become President of the Republic some fifteen years later.

In the scandal that accompanied his fall the real services which he had rendered to the State, and his sincere attempts to restrain the great development of Radicalism in the country, were quite forgotten. He had been weak in many things, blind in some others, but he had always been honest, even when his son-in-law was doing questionable things in his name. And certainly at the time of the Schnaebele incident it had only been by his intervention and his wisdom that a war with Germany had been avoided. He had, in that dangerous moment, shown both dignity and firmness, and succeeded in settling with honour difficulties which but for him might have led to the most serious consequences. France, when thinking of him or talking about him, should never forget this.

When he resigned, there was again a question raised as to who should be asked to become his successor, and the name of Jules Ferry was once more put forward. But Jules Ferry was considered as far too Conservative by the Paris Municipal Council, which sent delegates to the National Assembly to warn it that, should he be chosen, the population of the faubourgs would come down to Versailles in order to signify its veto. To tell the truth, Ferry's energy was feared, and it was dreaded that he would prove himself a master rather than a President. M. de Freycinet was out of the question, when suddenly M. Carnot's candidature was put forward by M. Clemenceau, who was beginning already to assume the leadership of the Radical party, and to make himself respected by all the others.

At that moment Sadi Carnot was Minister of Finance.

He had quite recently been the object of an ovation in the Chamber of Deputies when he had refused to exonerate M. Wilson from the payment of certain taxes which he owed to the State, and from which he had attempted to escape, thanks to his relationship with President Grévy. Carnot was the personification of that caste which is called in all the old memoirs of the eighteenth century, " les grands bourgeois de Paris." His past career had been irreproachable, he had perhaps few friends, not being at all pliant, but he had a remarkable absence of enemies. His personal appearance was grave and solemn, not to say dull ; he did not speak much, and his manners were always cold and distant. He made an excellent President, and had he not come to such a tragic end, it is probable that no one would ever have given him a thought after he had left office.

When he was murdered the Radical party had already secured a very large majority in the Chamber as well as in the Senate, and all thoughts as to the possibility of a Republic governed according to Conservative principles had long ago vanished. For a few brief months his successor, Casimir Périer, tried to fight against the tide of anarchism which was slowly rising, but after him no one attempted it, and the Republic fell entirely into the hands of M. Clemenceau and his friends.

## CHAPTER XX

### Leon Gambetta

Without being an intimate friend of Leon Gambetta, I used nevertheless to see him very often, and there existed between us one of those close relationships which sometimes draw together people whose opinions are totally different. I had first met him before the war, when he had not reached the fame which ultimately became his. I admired him more than I liked him, and to tell the truth he never was fully in sympathy with me, but it was impossible to see him often and not to be struck by his immense intelligence, and especially by the extraordinary powers of assimilation which distinguished him.

I have already mentioned that at the beginning of his political career he had little idea of social requirements, yet as soon as he found out his mistake he speedily made it his aim to acquire knowledge of the customs and manners current in the higher classes of society, and to make a special study of its code of etiquette. He realised quite well that sometimes trivial details bring about tremendous results, and that if a man wants to lead his country he must not begin by giving the public occasion to ridicule him. Besides, there lay at the bottom of the character of this extraordinary man a thirst for luxury, for power, for riches, for all the good things of the world, which alone would have been sufficient to make him study the refinements without which they become useless. Gambetta was an epicure in the fullest sense of that

word, and the apparent carelessness which he had affected in outward appearance when he entered political life proceeded more from the desire to attract notice to himself than from anything else.

He wanted to impose his personality upon others, and not knowing how to do so, he tried to attain it by an apparent indifference to those outward things that rule the actions of ordinary men.

When once he was thrown into contact with good society, and especially after he had fallen under the influence of Madame Edmond Adam, or Juliette Adam as earlier I referred to her, his views of life changed considerably. He very soon became more refined in his tastes and habits, the equal in social deportment of those men and women whose judgments and opinions he had affected to despise in the days when he was a street orator who frequented the Café Procope and other meeting-places of the young Radical party who made it its business to attack the Empire at every opportunity.

The war sobered him, and his short sojourn in the responsible position of member of a government, such as it was, considerably changed his ideas. He at once perceived that it was easier to criticise men in power than to do their work. He was a great patriot in the sense that he put his country before anything else in the world, and that he was ready to sacrifice all that he held dear for its welfare, but he was no chauvinist, though so often accused of fomenting chauvinism in France. He had a very clear comprehension of every political situation, and also of the different ways in which it could be explained to the crowd, who generally see only the externals of questions without ever going into their details.

He wanted his country to regain its former power and fame, and he knew that this would be difficult if the idea

of the humiliation it had endured was always put before its eyes, and if the wounds it had received were always made to smart. In a certain sense he was right, in another he was wrong, because France might have been more quiet now, and more prosperous even in the material sense of the word, if that idea of a *revanche* had not always been fostered, and had she been taught to reconcile herself to accomplished facts. In saying this I know that many among my readers will scream outright, but not being a Frenchman I may be allowed to express my opinion, that it would be to the advantage of a country for which I have always had the greatest sympathy if she began thinking more about herself and less about another war with Germany.

Gambetta exercised an unbounded influence on many people, and was the object of hatred to many others, but no one who met him could pass him by with indifference. If he had not been of a lazy disposition he might easily have become Prime Minister long before he did, and in this connection I must relate a story which probably will surprise more than one person. Gambetta, though he led his party, and though he was at one moment the most powerful man in France, showed always some reluctance when the question of his forming a government was raised. I ventured one day to ask him why. He replied to me that, now he understood the responsibility of the head of a Cabinet, and had studied European politics, he did not think himself up to the task, and also did not think that his presence in a ministry would be to the advantage of France, because his name had become synonymous with the principle of a war with Germany, for which he was but too well aware that his country was not prepared. "Later on," he added, "my day may come, but I feel that now, though I may have a great deal more intelligence than some of the foreign ministers who lead

the destinies of other countries, I haven't their experience of affairs, nor their perfect knowledge of saying pretty things which they do not mean. This would make me appear inferior to them, and France must not be represented by a man to whom this reproach applies. France must hold her own, and something more, in the presence of Europe."

I made a gesture of surprise, which he noticed.

"You are astonished at what I tell you," he remarked, "but do you think me such a poor patriot to put my own personal advantage or ambitions before her welfare? This would be very miserable indeed, and I know of no meaner thing than accepting office when one is aware that it is not for the good of one's fatherland. I know very well what is thought about me in Europe, and especially in Germany, and I do not wish to give the latter country the slightest excuse to say that she has been provoked, or that we are following a policy of aggression. Such policy is unworthy of a great nation, and we are a great nation, in spite of our reverses, and we must remain one, though some people would like us to come down from that height. We must work to consolidate our position, to become powerful enough and strong enough to be able to strike when the day comes, not only with the chance, but with the certitude, of success. What is the good of wasting one's time in petty strifes or petty recriminations? Yes, I think about revenge, I think of nothing else, but I should be ashamed to be thought eager for it at once, and at any price; above all I would not like to risk losing it by such a miserable circumstance as my becoming head of the government at a time when the hour for it had not yet struck."

I relate this conversation in its entirety as it shows the real patriotism which animated Gambetta, as well as his great foresight and intuition in politics in general. Very

few statesmen would have viewed a situation with such entire self-abnegation. In France especially, where the thirst after power and official positions was so great, he constituted a solitary and noble exception. I think that the happiest time in Gambetta's life was when he was President of the Chamber, and inhabited the Palais Bourbon. There he felt in his element, and also at the height, not of his ambitions, but of his wishes—a totally different matter. In the old home of the Duc de Morny he did not consider himself inferior to that clever councillor of Napoleon III., and reflected with some satisfaction on the circumstances that had brought him there, and placed him in the chair occupied with such authority by the illegitimate son of Queen Hortense. In his new position also he could give way to the luxurious tastes which he had always nursed and only appeared to scorn, because he had not been able to believe he would ever be in a position to gratify them.

Leon Gambetta also felt that in the capacity of leader of the representatives of the nation he would have more opportunities of learning the real wants of that nation, and thus, when the day came that he could do so, would be able to work for its welfare with better chances of success than he had had hitherto. His rare tact served him well, and his knowledge of mankind, something quite different from knowledge of the world, made him avoid many of the mistakes another placed in his position would inevitably have fallen victim to. He made an excellent President of the Chamber, just as he made an admirable host in the Palais Bourbon, where he displayed his epicurean tastes in a way that drew upon him the censure of the newspapers, which tried to ridicule the former Socialist leader, whose first care had been to get as his cook the most famous chef in Paris.

Madame Adam used sometimes to smile at the change

which her influence, more than anything else, had brought about in Gambetta. But when he became President of the Chamber their intimacy slackened, for a very short time it is true, but slackened all the same. Gambetta, it must be owned, was very sensible to feminine charms and feminine blandishments. Strange as it may seem when one takes into consideration his extreme ugliness, the fact that he had but one eye, and was enormously fat, he yet exercised a great fascination on women in general, and he liked to use it, and to spend part of his spare time in the society of the fair ladies who worshipped at his shrine. This partly was the cause of his death. But about this we shall speak later on.

When at last circumstances arose which obliged Gambetta to accept the task of forming a Cabinet, it was with the utmost reluctance, in spite of all that has been said concerning this subject, that he undertook it. He had no faith in the possibility of being a long time at the head of affairs, and as he told one of his friends: "Why take such trouble when one is assured beforehand it is for nothing?" Nevertheless he started earnestly to work to give to the government the direction he thought the best for the interests of the country. But the composition of the Chambers was not congenial to him; he felt himself far superior to all those men upon the vote of whom his fate depended, and this made him impatient as to the control which they pretended to exercise over him. He despised them, if the truth must be said, and involuntarily he allowed this feeling to appear in the manner in which he handled them, a fact that had much to do with the short time he remained in power.

His advent as Prime Minister had excited considerable sensation abroad; even in France it was the signal for the retirement from public life of many people who felt that they could not remain in office under such a thoroughly Radical

government as the one he was supposed to lead. Among those who resigned was the Comte de St. Vallier, at that time French Ambassador in Berlin.

When his resignation was accepted he thought himself obliged, nevertheless, to call on the Prime Minister when he returned to Paris, in order to express to him his regrets that the opinions which he held prevented him from working harmoniously with him. Gambetta received him with great affability and courteousness, and at once said: "You are wrong to go away, I shall not remain for long where I am now, and you would have rendered a greater service to France by remaining at your post than by a retreat which, as you will see, will prove to have been useless. Je ne suis qu'un bouche-trou ('I am only a stop-gap'), and very probably the President of the Republic in entrusting to me the task of forming a government wanted to prove to France how impossible it is for a Radical ministry ever to maintain itself. The sad part of this is that, though I am a Republican, I have no Radical sympathies. I assure you that this is the fact, and that you would have found me far more inclined to sympathise with your opinions than with those of the people who are supposed to be my followers. The great mistake that we are constantly making in France is to mix up opinions with the way in which the country must be governed. We ought to have neither a Conservative, nor a Radical, nor even a Republican government; we ought to have a French one. This would be quite enough. I am sorry you have resigned; very sorry, indeed."

But Gambetta did not convince M. de St. Vallier, and he insisted on retiring from the diplomatic service, a fact which I have reasons to believe he regretted later on.

The great dream of Gambetta was to establish a *modus vivendi* and a kind of understanding with Germany. He

knew very well how useless it is in life to go back on things which are already accomplished, and to cry over spilt milk. And he did not care for France to go on living in the state of *qui vive* which had been hers ever since the disasters which had accompanied the war of 1870. He knew also that he had far greater chances to take into his hands the reins of government, and to keep them if once he had succeeded in doing away with this fear of a German aggression, which haunted the public mind. He was no partisan of compulsory service, and did not approve of too great military expenses, entered into by fear of an imaginary danger. That it was imaginary he was convinced, because he knew very well that Germany was in the same position in which Napoleon III. had found himself: that of risking the loss of everything and gaining nothing from a new campaign. But this conviction which was his alone he could not persuade others to share, and for this reason he tried to arrange an interview between himself and Prince von Bismarck.

A great deal has been written about this episode, and several of Gambetta's friends have done their best to try to induce the public to forget it. I don't know why they believed that it was not to his honour. Nor why, either, Gambetta could not have met the German Chancellor when other French political men had done so without anyone saying a single word against it. By every sensible person the idea of this interview could only have been hailed with pleasure. Two great minds like those could not but have found together the solution of many difficulties which divided the two nations, and it would have been doing the greatest injustice to Leon Gambetta to imagine that he would not have borne himself with the dignity necessary to the representative of a great country.

It was Count Henckel von Donnersmarck, the husband

of Madame de Paiva, whose fame still lives in Paris, who was sounded by Gambetta as to the possibility of a meeting between himself and Bismarck, and he did his very best to arrange it in such a manner that it might not become known to the public, at least not until after it had actually taken place. Unfortunately outward circumstances interfered with this plan, and Gambetta had to forgo his intention, partly because his great friend Ranc told him that if he ventured on such a thing he would entirely lose the confidence of the Radical party. Whether it was this consideration or another one, the fact remains that he felt afraid at the last minute, in view of the hostility of his constituents, to incur the responsibility of a step which his intelligence and his intuition told him was the best for the interests of the France he loved so dearly.

Much has been written, and much surmised, concerning the death of Gambetta. It is now pretty certain that the wound which he received was not its immediate cause, which must be looked for elsewhere, and can be attributed partly to his general constitution, which was considerably impaired, and partly to the treatment which had been applied to him. But upon this point it must not be forgotten that at that time operations were not the usual thing that they have become since, and surgical intervention was generally dreaded, and resorted to only as a last resource.

As to the pistol shot, about which so many suppositions have been made, I think that in spite of Gambetta's own denials there can be hardly a matter of doubt that it was a lady who, in a fit of fury, had inflicted the wound that disabled him. It is no secret now, that Gambetta was on the point of marrying a lady of high social standing, the Marchioness Arconati-Visconti, the daughter of the Senator Peyrat, and the widow of a Milanese nobleman. That union was to put the seal to his career, and to open for him many new vistas.

As the husband of a beautiful, accomplished woman of the world, he could in time aspire to anything and, who knows, become President of the Republic for life, which was his dearest secret wish.

But in order to accomplish his desire, he had first to end a situation that did not date from yesterday, to cut off an intimacy of twenty years with a noble woman who had been his friend in the bad as well as in the good days, and who had given him innumerable proofs of her devotion. Gambetta was well aware of the difficulties which such a step presented, and for a long time he had not the courage to tackle the subject, hoping that she would hear something about his new plans, and herself begin the conversation on this delicate matter. The lady, however, kept silent, perhaps because she did not believe in the rumours which had reached her, and partly because she would not give her friend the opportunity he was seeking. At last Gambetta asked his old comrade Spuller to see her and to try to persuade her to have the courage to sacrifice herself to his welfare. He reasoned like a man, and an ungrateful man into the bargain, and she refused to accept the solution which was offered to her, and which might have soothed the pride of a person more devoid of feelings of attachment for her lover of long years than was the case with her. She dismissed Spuller with scorn, and rushed to Ville d'Avray, where Gambetta was residing, in order to seek an interview that could only be a stormy one.

It was during this interview that Gambetta was wounded. And those who were made aware of all the circumstances attending this drama of feminine jealousy, knew who it was that fired the fatal shot which lodged itself in the right hand of the French statesman. When he himself was questioned as to the accident, he always said that he had wounded himself

in trying to clean a revolver, a circumstance that was the more unlikely because he was seldom in possession of such a weapon. Moreover, to some of his friends, like Spuller and Paul Bert, he only remarked that he had got nothing but what he had deserved.

Perhaps it was this consciousness which made him so patient during his illness, and also so shy of seeing anyone, even his friends, whilst it lasted. He used to lie quietly, with closed eyes, and avoid any conversations that could have touched upon the subject of the accident which had occurred to him. And when later on other symptoms made their appearance, he begged the people who surrounded him to say everywhere that these symptoms had nothing to do with his wound.

If, in his dying moments, he was conscious, he must have regretted deeply his ingratitude in regard to the woman who had loved him with such true affection, and who had been tempted to an act of despair when she learned that she was about to be forsaken for one who certainly did not have for Gambetta the same passionate affection. It was after all the sweet lady who had for so long had him in her affections who watched over his deathbed, and who closed his eyes for ever, whilst the proud lady for whose sake he had been about to sacrifice her never even made an appearance at Ville d'Avray. She went on living her former life as if no tragedy had crossed it, after death had removed from this worldly scene the great politician to whom ambition had very nearly united her.

And now that years have passed over this drama, since the removal from the scene of political France of the great patriot who was called Leon Gambetta, it is still very difficult to form a true judgment about him. He died before he had given the full measure of his qualities, or shown the real stuff he was made of. He was for too short a time in

a responsible position to allow us to say whether he would have proved as able a leader of a government as he had shown himself to be a powerful leader of men. The two things are very different, and the man who can master one is found sometimes to be lacking in the other. What, however, cannot be taken away from him is his true, earnest patriotism, the absence of all vanity that distinguished him, his readiness to sacrifice everything in his power at the shrine of his fatherland, and his desire to serve it, according to what he considered to be its interests. He was fearless in his devotion, and worked for his country without paying any attention to the reproaches of the crowd.

The man was colossal in his way, and there was nothing mean about him. His conceptions were as great as his soul. Of course he was often mistaken, like every human being, but he was always sincere even in his errors, and he never hesitated to acknowledge the latter when they were shown to him.

Reared in different circumstances, and able to show his value otherwise than by starting on the road of revolution, which bordered very closely on anarchy, he might have become truly a great man. He had all the instincts of one—and all the imperfections. He was authoritative and could be very firm, but he tried always to be just, and avoided wounding others, even his adversaries, as much as it was possible for him to do so. He was invariably courteous, even in his exhibitions of rage, and essentially kind, a faithful friend, and a gallant enemy. Hated by those who had never known him, or met him personally, he contrived to fascinate all those who had done so; they always went away from him liking the man, even when condemning the politician. He had a careless manner in talking about his foes, which was superb in its way, and though he seldom spoke about

himself, yet he liked to find that he was respected, feared, or even abused.

The one thing he never could have reconciled himself to would have been to be ignored, and this indignity was spared him. Perhaps it was better for his memory that he died in the full force of his talent, and before he had reached the maturity of his years—perhaps it was a pity. Who knows?

## CHAPTER XXI

### The Adventure of General Boulanger

One of the most curious episodes in the life of the Third Republic was certainly the adventure of General Boulanger, with all its attendant circumstances, many of which have not yet seen the light of day. It illustrates the taste of the Frenchman for what is vulgarly called, in the *argot* of the boulevards, "le panache."

The "Brave Général," to give him the name used in the romances sung by Paulus, was anything but a superior being. I doubt if he was a strikingly intelligent one. He had neither the qualities nor the aptitudes which constitute a hero. He never understood his own power, nor realised the influence which, at a certain moment, he wielded over the masses; he was almost without ambition; he seldom knew what was required of him; and no one was more surprised than himself when suddenly he found that he had become the most popular man in all France.

His rise as well as his fall prove very forcibly that the time is past, and past for ever, when adventurers, by the glamour which they exercise over the crowd, can become masters as well as leaders.

To those who were in Paris at that period, it is more than difficult to account for the sudden blossoming of this very inferior plant in the garden of French political life, whilst those who have never lived in the French capital will utterly fail to realise the circumstances that brought it into evidence.

# Adventure of General Boulanger

The fact is that Boulangism was the product of the private ambitions of a considerable number of people who, strange as it may seem, had nothing to do with each other, and who did not work together to ensure triumph. On the other hand, each individual directed his effort to securing for himself alone all the benefit arising from the movement, and in this General Boulanger played no part at all, though he appeared to be the leading spirit of the whole intrigue associated with his name.

The rise into popularity of General Boulanger took place some little time after the election of M. Sadi Carnot to the Presidency of the Republic. Carnot was a perfect type of the bourgeoisie of Paris of the olden days—always cool and methodical, severe in his principles, strong in his convictions, rather narrow-minded in his views; an austere figure, the embodiment of honesty, self-respect personified. His very possessions he looked upon merely as a means for commanding an added respect, and throughout his life he was also a strict observer of the law. To these sterling qualities, however, he added nothing that appealed to the hearts of his countrymen. He did not excite public enthusiasm, and scarcely succeeded in winning for himself public sympathies. He was too correct, and perhaps this extreme observance of his duties, whether political, social, or private, interfered with his popularity; nations, as well as individuals, do not care to be always confronted by perfection; they are apt to think it rather dull.

Under such circumstances it is little wonder that people began to look beyond the President of the Republic for the hero which they had yearned after ever since the disasters of the Franco-German War had awakened in them the desire for revenge on the victors. Further, there were certain ambitious politicians who wanted to come into the limelight,

and who felt that the steady determination of M. Carnot to govern according to strictly constitutional principles left no room for them or for their plans.

The Republic, at that distant time of which I am writing, was not yet established so firmly in the heart of the people that its overthrow could not be admitted within the range of possibilities. Is it therefore to be wondered that those who longed for change should have looked around them for the man strong enough to lead such an adventure?

Boulanger, beyond looking well on his black horse, had but little to recommend him as a possible destroyer of the Republic. Still, he was a general, a position which has always possessed great prestige in the eyes of a certain section of French society. He was not shrewd enough to observe where his so-called friends were trying to lead him. As a consequence he allowed himself to be carried away by the tide that at last threw him against the rocks of Jersey, where his political career ended even before his life came to a sudden close in the little churchyard of Uxelles, near Brussels.

There is no denying that Boulangism was engineered by the Royalist party on the one side, and by some enterprising journalists on the other. Either of these two circumstances would have been enough in itself ultimately to wreck the cause, but at the beginning it appeared in the light of a movement which appealed so well to the sympathies and to the feelings of the whole nation that it seemed even more formidable from a distance than when in its midst.

Everything conspired to transform it into a vast conspiracy. When, after the fall of the Goblet ministry, in which he held the portfolio of the War Office, Boulanger found himself obliged to retire from political life, and was transferred to the command of an army corps at Clermont Ferrand, he could not reconcile himself to his exile, but used to come back

*Photo: Gerschel, Paris.*

CAPTAIN DREYFUS

*Photo: Petit, Paris.*

GENERAL BOULANGER

*Photo: Gerschel, Paris.*

EMILE ZOLA

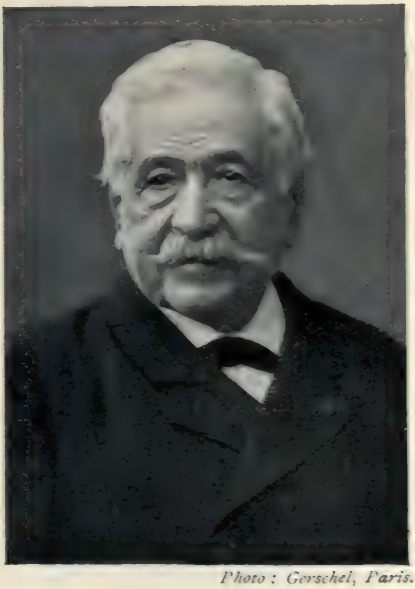

*Photo: Gerschel, Paris.*

M. DE LESSEPS

secretly and disguised to Paris, to see Madame de Bonnemains, who had sacrificed for him her social position in a most select circle of Parisian society. Once or twice people met him in disguise, and recognised him, in spite of a pair of blue spectacles behind which he fondly hoped he would remain unknown. Thereupon he was immediately invested with mystery and romance by those who hoped to find in him a docile instrument to further their personal ambitions; and so, in order to compel those in power to deprive him of his command, he was accused of conspiring against the safety of the Republic. Thus, by restoring him to private life, he had thrust upon him by these intriguers the opportunity to aspire to the supreme functions of Head of the State.

For some time even staunch Republicans looked at him with dread. The next step was taken by an unknown journalist, who came forth suddenly as the apostle of this new messiah, and who conceived the idea of distributing, in several departments, bulletins of votes bearing the name of General Boulanger.

In a few days, therefore, France heard with amazement that a multitude of voters had expressed their willingness to send Boulanger as a deputy to the Chamber, a thing undreamt of but for M. George Thiebaud's adventurous experiment. It was M. Thiebaud who had created Boulangism. He was not the only factor in fostering the movement. Another journalist, one who was well known on the boulevards, M. Arthur Meyer, the proprietor of the *Gaulois*, Count Dillon, and the private secretary of the Comte de Paris, the Marquis de Beauvoir—all played a part. All three were men of no mean intelligence, who saw possibilities in this man to whom the attention of France had been attracted for bringing back to the throne of their ancestors those Orleans Princes who had failed to secure for themselves the help of Marshal MacMahon during the time he reigned at the Elysée.

These three men were credited, in the estimation of those behind the scenes, with starting this extraordinary adventure which ended so piteously for its principal character. They furthermore drew into the enterprise three other strong elements—Henri Rochefort, Count Albert de Mun, and the Duchesse d'Uzés, while through their influence also became champions, though in lesser degree, such men as Paul Déroulède and George Laguerre—an advocate of great talent, who nevertheless is forgotten to-day—and Lucien Millevoye, who was given charge of one of the most important missions that those who played with the name of Boulanger ever entrusted to their adherents.

Strange to say, each one of these persons, down to Madame Adam, who, almost unknown to herself, was also drawn into the many dark intrigues to which Boulangism gave rise, worked for a different aim. The Duchess d'Uzés, when asked to contribute financially to the success of the enterprise, was actuated by the secret desire to become the Egeria of the new hero whose star was rising in the firmament of her country's existence, and to rule that country under his name. Albert de Mun thought only of the restoration of the Monarchy. The Marquis de Beauvoir saw himself so firmly established in the confidence of the Comte de Paris that the latter would feel himself in honour bound to stand by him whenever one of those financial catastrophes, which were periodical events with him, should once again occur. Henri Rochefort was actuated by his everlasting mania of opposing every existing government, a mania to which he owed his success as a journalist and as a politician, and to which he would only have given way with more virulence than before had some freak of fortune really brought to the pinnacle Boulanger and his black horse. Arthur Meyer saw in the emprise the opportunity to present himself before the world as the statesman he firmly believed

himself to be. Others, such as Déroulède, imagined that the General would conquer at the point of his sword those provinces which had been snatched from France; or Laguerre, who hoped for a substantial financial reward, and Millevoye, who aspired to become the Prime Minister of a President of Republic after his own heart—all these men worked with the same tools for different purposes. They were interested in the cause they were supporting, but they did not believe in it otherwise than as a means to an end.

Whether they would have gone on fighting under the same flag had that cause triumphed is another question. Very probably not; but while the struggle lasted, they threw themselves into it with all the faculties for good or for evil with which nature had endowed them. And when the battle was lost, the disillusion was equally bitter for each of them.

Any attempt to analyse the different phases through which Boulangism had to pass can only result in wonder that it could have maintained its popularity for such a relatively considerable time, and also that it aroused the serious apprehensions which permeated the ranks of the Republican supporters of the government. The party had no leader except the irresolute General whom it had adopted.

Madame d'Uzés, who was in possession of a considerable fortune through her mother, was a woman who had never been handsome. She was intelligent, like all the Mortemart family to which she belonged, ambitious, rather tyrannical in character, and violent in her temper when she was opposed or annoyed. She had been left a widow while still young, and enjoyed a foremost position in the Faubourg St. Germain owing to her great name and immense riches. One of her daughters had married the Duc de Brissac, the second one was the Duchesse de Luynes. She was allied to the bluest blood of France, and had Court precedence been in vogue,

she would have held first rank. She had nothing to gain and everything to lose by throwing herself into the arms of the "Brave Général," and the cause which led her to join the ranks of Boulangism must have been that she had imagined that when once the "King" had entered again into his inheritance, the part she had played in that restoration would win for her a foremost place in his confidence, would ensure for her an exclusive position among the ranks of his advisers. Then, too, if the truth must be told, like so many women before her, she had also been fascinated by the personal charm of Boulanger, and when in his presence her heart, old though it was already, would beat just a little faster than usual. Her desire to rescue her idol from the fascinations of the woman who held him tied to her apron strings may also have had something to do with the facility with which she opened her purse to him as well as the doors of her house.

Not only did she become his friend, but also the confidante of his ambitions; of his deceptions; of his ever-increasing bitterness at the daily insults and the calumnies which were showered upon him by some of his former friends who accused him of treason against their party; of his doubts concerning the so-called virtues of the Republicans as well as of the Republic itself. She used to comfort him, turn his thoughts away from such vexatious matters, and try to win him over almost imperceptibly to her own political ideas. At last she thought she had succeeded; but she had not sufficient perspicacity to judge of the true character of Boulanger, who had never understood anything in the way of politics except the old saying: "Otes toi de là, que je m'y mette!" ("Get out from there in order that I may step into your place!")

Count Albert de Mun was the only really strong man who had joined the ranks of the Boulangists—I mean strong in

the sense of principles and opinions. He was the son of the charming Eugénie de la Forronays, one of the most delightful among the gallery of delightful women who adorn that so widely read book, the " Récit d'une Sœur," by Mrs. Augustus Craven. He had been singularly blessed by Providence with all the qualities, physical, moral, and intellectual, that help to make a man attractive. He had talent, moreover, and remarkable eloquence, and he believed in monarchy as a system and as a tradition to which all his past as well as that of his race enjoined him to remain faithful. He had earnestly hoped that through Boulanger the cause to which he had devoted his life would triumph, and he did not hesitate to lend to the General the prestige of his personal influence over his own followers.

The Duchesse d'Uzés and the Count Albert de Mun were the most sincere in this most insincere adventure. It could add nothing to what they already possessed, and might, on the contrary, considerably endanger their position among their former friends in case of failure. All honour to them. They at least pursued no other aims than the gratification of their patriotic feelings. They may have been childish in heir loyalty, but there was nothing of sordidness or of petty feelings of revenge or of worldly triumph in its composition.

One can hardly say the same concerning others whom I have already mentioned. Laguerre was of a type of *condottieri* met with in the pages of the history of the Italian republics, ready to do anything except turn back on the enterprise once begun, whose hands were always open to receive but not to give, whose ambitions were great, but unselfishness limited, who looked toward the enjoyments of the present hour and toward the gratification of the fancies of the moment, but never ahead ; who could not see the consequences of their actions, because they knew that these would

fall on other heads than their own. A brilliant man was Laguerre, but a character that did not inspire confidence and sacrifice, one of those tools which are indispensable to every conspiracy. His eloquence was unrivalled, his wit something marvellous, his way of handling irony as a weapon, quite indescribable; but though he was a politician, he was not a political man, and even less a statesman.

Déroulède was a patriot, if patriotism is synonymous with rabidness. He could influence the masses by the torrent of his words. Whether he could lead them is a question which has remained unanswered to this day, and one may be excused if one entertains doubts concerning his capacities in that respect. He had made a name for himself by his anti-German feelings; he gave it even more importance by his attitude in the Boulanger conspiracy; but when he put his undoubted popularity at the service of the General he did so with the intention of working for the welfare of the Republic, and he would have become his most bitter foe had he found out that Boulanger was but the instrument of the Orleanist party.

As for Millevoye, it was another thing. He was the only one among all these passengers in the same ship who had something akin to political penetration, and who could understand that, when one aspires to overthrow the government of a country, it is necessary to secure for oneself strong sympathies abroad in order not to find obstacles in the way later on. He also had patriotic feelings akin to those of Déroulède, but he had more shrewdness, and he it was who deceived himself that he could procure for General Boulanger the support of no less a personage than the Tsar of all the Russias.

When the events which I am about to relate occurred, the Franco-Russian *rapprochement* had not yet taken place. In

1888 the idea of a French alliance was not popular in Russia, and especially was its Foreign Office strongly German in its leanings. Nevertheless, Millevoye determined to see for himself whether it would not be possible to triumph over a certain mistrust which existed in Russian official spheres in regard to the French Republic. He resolved to offer in exchange a mute acquiescence to the election for life of General Boulanger as its President, a defensive alliance against Germany and Austria, as well as the support of France in case Russia wanted to settle to her advantage the long-pending question of the Straits and the Bosphorus.

In this episode lies the only attempt at seriousness of the Boulanger conspiracy, and it would be a pity that it should remain in the darkness which hitherto has enshrouded it. Millevoye, in order to execute the plan that he had elaborated, addressed himself to Madame Adam (Juliette Lambert), and asked her for her advice. Juliette Lambert, who still dreamed of an ideal Republic, put at the service of Millevoye all her genius and all her heart. She gave him a letter of introduction to a friend she had in St. Petersburg, a lady well known in Court circles ; and, in order to ensure the success of Millevoye, who had been very careful to hide from her the fact that he wanted to enlist the sympathies of Russia in favour of General Boulanger—rather, telling her that his aim was to propose, in the name of the Republican party, an alliance against Germany—she had given him certain political documents calculated to help him in his perilous adventure.

Millevoye first sent to St. Petersburg his friend, Miss Maud Gonne, a lovely Irish girl, who since that time made herself widely known owing to her advocacy of Fenianism.

Miss Maud Gonne duly arrived in Russia, and, thanks to her efforts and those of the Russian lady to whom I have already referred, Millevoye was introduced into the presence of

M. Pobedonostseff, then Procurator of the Holy Synod and personal friend of Alexander III., who promised he would himself submit to the Sovereign the documents which Millevoye left in his charge.

During this interview which the Russian statesman granted to the French politician the latter broached at once the question of General Boulanger, but this met with no response. The Tsar was far too shrewd a man to allow himself to be drawn into an adventure which, besides everything else, had against it a shade of ridicule. Millevoye was discouraged in his dreams, but the seeds sown by his journey were to bring fruit in quite an unexpected fashion much later on.

Madame Adam was furious when she heard that Millevoye, instead of pleading the cause of the Republic, had tried to put forward that of General Boulanger. She not only turned her back upon him when he returned crestfallen from his journey, but joined the ranks of the adversaries of the pseudo hero, becoming one of the advisers of M. Constant in the campaign that the latter led with such success against Boulangism and its chief leaders.

M. Arthur Meyer, to whom already I have made a passing reference, is more in his proper place among journalists than in the ranks of political men. He is a curious figure in the kaleidoscopic picture that Parisian society represents to-day, and though he has no aristocratic ancestry behind him, he is ever a welcome and much-desired guest in the select salons of the city.

It can, therefore, hardly be wondered that with such elements the Boulangist party was doomed to failure. It was born by accident out of the imagination of a man who had nothing better to do than to try to raise tiny storms in a teacup. It wanted a leader, and it required soldiers to push it forward. Unfortunately, it attracted politicians, each of

whom wanted to exploit it for the furtherance of his own cause, and was led by a man in love, who preferred the caresses of Madame de Bonnemains to the chances of being imprisoned, and who afterwards was carried to the Elysée by the enthusiasm of an intoxicated nation, who would have risen like one man to deliver him had the government tried to capture him.

M. Constant, one of the ablest Prime Ministers France has ever had, judged the acute situation with perfect accuracy. General Boulanger in prison was a danger to the safety of the Republic; General Boulanger in a voluntary exile ceased to be a subject of dread to anyone. In France, more than in any other country, cowardice is fatal. She turned her head away from her favourite of the day before when she found out that he had not the courage to take a single risk in order to ensure his future triumph. When M. Constant caused to be conveyed secretly to the "Brave Général" the fact that he was to be arrested during the night, and also managed to procure for himself the alliance of Madame de Bonnemains in her fear of losing her lover, the fate of Boulangism was sealed. Deprived of its chief, and of his prestige—which was far more important, because it was on that prestige the leaders of the party had reckoned far more than on the man himself—the forlorn cause he had embodied was bound to fall with a crash and bury everything under its debris.

As for the heroine of this semi-burlesque and semi-dramatic adventure, she died shortly after its dénouement. When Boulanger had fled from France at her earnest request, she was already doomed, and what is worse, she knew it. She was selfish enough to wish to keep for herself during the few days which were left to her on earth the love of the man she adored, and, seriously, who can blame her for it? Certainly had Boulanger been of the material from which conspirators

are made he would have sacrificed her on the altar of his future glory. It would have been masculine selfishness, and though his partisans may regret he did not display it, others may be forgiven if they see a redeeming feature to all the follies which will ever remain inseparable from the name of Boulanger, in the weakness which made him lose and destroy a political party, because he could not bear to see a woman weep. It is certain that he truly loved Madame de Bonnemains; his suicide is proof.

## CHAPTER XXII

### The Panama Scandal

One of the saddest of the many sad scandals that have damaged the fair fame of the Third Republic has certainly been the lamentable adventure connected with the Panama Canal. It gave rise to such despicable intrigues, brought to light such demeaning cupidities, provoked such bitter animosities, that the only wonder is that the Republic itself did not perish in the resulting sea of mud which was showered upon it as well as upon its leading men.

It would be difficult to relate all the intricacies of this memorable affair, but an effort can be made to describe its various phases so far as they have become known. It is next to impossible to determine the limit where truth ends and fabrication begins in this inextricable embroglio, which arose out of the fear of some, the avarice of others, the general corruption everywhere. This struck home the more because it occurred in a country where the establishment of a Republican government had been hailed with joy by those who accused the Empire of having brought along with it the system of *pots de vin*, to use the typical French expression, about which fierce Radicals, like Ranc, for instance, spoke always with such disdain and contempt.

Whatever occurred later on, the Panama enterprise was a perfectly honest one at its beginning. The high honour of Ferdinand de Lesseps would alone have been a perfect guarantee as to the intentions of its promoters, even if these

had been unknown men, and such was not the case. But the difficulties which the whole affair presented had never been properly appreciated, and the brilliant success of the Suez Canal had blinded the eyes of those who aspired to emulate it under different conditions, and without the moral help of powerful people such as the Emperor Napoleon III., and the Khedive Ismail. Without this even the genius of Lesseps might have proved insufficient, in presence of the opposition which England made to the construction of the canal.

Lesseps himself had grown old, and, thanks to the atmosphere of flattery with which he was surrounded, had come to believe that nothing would be impossible once he was associated with it. At the same time he naively acknowledged that he had not the slightest idea either of the country, or of the local conditions with which the builders of the new canal would find themselves confronted in actual working.

The first difficulty which arose was, of course, the want of money. It was soon discovered that the funds first subscribed would prove totally insufficient. Then someone suggested the unfortunate idea of an appeal to the government for permission to organise a public lottery, the proceeds of which would be devoted to the construction of the canal.

It was the issue of these so-called Panama bonds which was to end in a disaster quite unprecedented in the annals of French finance, and which struck the country to its heart, because its principal victims belonged to the poorer classes who had been fascinated by the magical name of Ferdinand de Lesseps.

The lottery, however, was not so easy to organise, and at first met with considerable opposition in political circles. Lotteries were not looked upon with favour; one which had for object the continuation of an enterprise that

after all was not French, and which offered no guarantee that it would remain in French hands, did not inspire sympathy, indeed, several leading politicians openly declared that they would do their very best to discredit the scheme. On the other hand money was wanted, and, what is still more important, courage was wanting also on the part of the directors of the new company to declare openly that, the result of the subscriptions not having answered their expectations, the best thing to do would be to go into voluntary liquidation.

But by adopting such a course, one would have proclaimed defeat openly, and even an honest man like Charles de Lesseps recoiled before such a course, well realising the storm of abuse which it would provoke on all sides. The directors therefore looked around them for means of salvation, and the issue of lottery bonds appeared as the best solution.

From that moment the sad story began, and the imprudent course which ended by bringing the grey hairs of the great Ferdinand de Lesseps to the grave in sorrow and shame was started. The permission of the government had to be obtained, either by fair means or by foul, and the necessity to save a work upon which so many hopes had been centred, and which had already cost so much money, persuaded the administrators of the Panama Company to listen to the tempting advice given to them by men like Cornelius Herz, or Arton, and to have recourse to the persuasion of cheques offered with the necessary discretion in order to win over to them a few rebellious consciences that hitherto had refused to be convinced of the necessity of issuing Panama lottery bonds.

This fact alone was sad enough. Unfortunately it was aggravated by political passion, and all the enemies of the government who afterwards were the first to cry out that

this scandal ought to have been prevented at all costs, that the services rendered to his country by the man known everywhere by the name of the "Grand Français" ought to have guaranteed him from such vile attacks which began from all sides to be made against his honour, were at that time the most rabid in their outcries against him and against the light-heartedness with which he had allowed himself to be drawn into the adventure which was ultimately to land him in the criminal dock.

The fact is that the scandal connected with the Panama enterprise could never have reached the proportions it attained had it not been for the passions of the Royalist party, which thought the situation might, if properly engineered, bring down the Republic, and allow them to instal a Monarchy in its place. They wanted to discredit the ministry then in power, to discredit the two Legislative Chambers—to discredit France, in short; but then it was of France that they thought the least.

I find a proof of this assertion in the book published a few years ago by Arthur Meyer, in which he mentions the Panama affair among other things, and relates how he called upon Charles de Lesseps at the time the truth was just beginning to ooze out in public, and told him that in order to save his skin, he ought to transform the private scandal into a public demonstration of the corruption prevailing in French political circles.

Charles de Lesseps, let it be said to his honour, was incapable of lending himself to such a proposal, and his reply deserves to be quoted in its entirety, for it illustrates his native honesty better than a thousand panegyrics would do:

"My conscience forbids me to reply to you," he said to Arthur Meyer when the latter implored him to name the individuals to whom the Panama company had distributed

cheques with a lavish hand. "Supposing even, which I deny, that the directors or the friends of the Panama Company, in order to serve its interests, had had recourse to measures which for my part I would always blame, do you think that I have the right to denounce people who have had confidence in my loyalty and in my discretion? No, I shall say nothing; and more than that, I have nothing to say. Our honesty will come out victoriously in all this campaign which has been started against us, and which I deplore far more for my father's sake than for our own. And then, I must add it, and I am talking now to you in perfect frankness, I care for the Republic. I will not go so far as to say that my Republican ideal has been attained at the present moment, but my wish is to spare to the Republic the shame of being plunged into that torrent of mud which you do not hesitate to throw upon her. You belong to a party which has particular opinions as to that subject; this is your private affair whether you accept its methods or not, but I certainly won't help you."

Meyer had to content himself with this proud reply, which is the more to be admired in that at the moment when he was so generously refusing to buy his own safety by denouncing those who had trusted to his honour, Charles de Lesseps was perfectly well aware that the very people whom he was trying to shield were themselves preparing to throw him overboard in order to save their already shattered reputations. When, however, the editor of the *Gaulois* pressed him to say whether it was true or not that Baron Jacques Reinach had been deputed to smooth down the timorous consciences of certain deputies and political men, and whether his name did not figure on the books of the Panama Company as the recipient of huge sums of money, he was obliged to own that as to this point, the accounts of the Panama Company being open to inspection by its shareholders, he could not hide the fact

that the Baron's name figured upon its books as having touched the sum of five million francs.

It was not much, but for a man endowed with the journalistic qualities of Arthur Meyer, it was enough. He forthwith proceeded to inquire as to what Baron Reinach had done with these millions which had been so liberally put at his disposal, and he very soon discovered that the said five millions had been transferred to a banking house called Thierrie, the owner of which had for sleeping partner the same Jacques Reinach.

Once this fact was established the rest was but child's play. Meyer very quickly secured the necessary proofs that a considerable number of deputies had received important bribes in order to vote for the issue of the Panama lottery bonds. He also discovered something else, and that was that this corruption had given birth to a huge system of blackmail, which had drained all the resources of the Panama Company. It had cruelly expiated its initial error, and had been made to pay for it dearly, in the literal sense of that word. A host of adventurers had threatened it with revelations, the divulging of which it could not risk, and the ball, once set rolling, had very soon been transformed into an avalanche which had carried away with it not only the money of the unfortunate shareholders, but also the honour and the reputation of the directors of this doomed concern.

Meyer, after holding a consultation with his faithful lieutenant, Cornély, of *Figaro* fame, did not hesitate one single moment as to what he had to do. He firmly believed that by raising the formidable scandal, the proofs of which in such an unexpected manner had been put within his reach, he would bring about the fall of the Republic, and thus pave the way towards the restoration of the Monarchy. Events showed that he was totally mistaken, because the Panama

scandal did not kill the Republic, it only overthrew a few political men and several Cabinets, and the shame of it fell more, perhaps, upon those who had made it public than upon the miserable beings who had been responsible for it without realising the abyss into which their light-heartedness would plunge them.

The man who set the ball rolling was a deputy belonging to the Extreme Right, M. Jules Delahaye, member for the department of Maine-et-Loire. He did not hesitate to brand with disgrace many of his colleagues, whose hands he had pressed perhaps a few hours before he consigned them to ignominy. He threw as a challenge to France, and also to Europe, the names of 104 deputies whose consciences had not hesitated before submitting to the fascination of the all-powerful cheque.

I have met M. Delahaye, and in justice to him I must say that he always maintained that he had never thought his speech would have the terrible consequences which followed upon it. Not in the least had he expected that that list of 104 deputies constituted but a fraction of the people who had, under one pretext or another, received money from the coffers of the Panama Company. He had never admitted, nor even believed possible, that the directors of that company would have so entirely lost their heads as to listen to every threat, submit to every extortion, and pay, pay, without discrimination and without hesitation, the enormous sums of hush money that had been drained out of them, half of the time by people who could not have harmed them in the least degree.

The fact is that this whole disaster had fear for its foundation, and political intrigue to thank for the unexpected development that overtook it. The few officials of the Panama Company administering its affairs after they had consented

to offer their first bribe, and had seen it accepted, immediately fell into the clutches of a band of blackmailers who had speculated on the impossibility of such a thing becoming public, and on the natural desire to prevent it getting to the knowledge not only of the shareholders of that unfortunate concern, but also of the venerable Ferdinand de Lesseps himself.

This last event was one which his son Charles most dreaded. He not only loved, but also respected his father, whose grey hairs he would have liked to go down honoured to the grave. He remembered the days when with the name Ferdinand de Lesseps one could attempt any kind of enterprise, could always find people ready to back it up, and to believe in it. He had not yet forgotten the praise bestowed on the "Grand Français," not only in his own fatherland, but also everywhere in Europe, and wherever he had shown himself. He was but too well aware of the honesty of purpose that had always distinguished the brave old man who was being pilloried by the same public that had cheered him a few months before, and he would have given much to be able to take upon his own shoulders the weight of the responsibilities that were crushing his father. He directed all his efforts towards that one aim, and he partly succeeded, because Providence turned out more merciful than men; she struck old Lesseps in his advanced age, and threw the veil of oblivion on his once powerful brain.

He never knew that he had been sentenced to imprisonment, he never understood anything of the tragedy of which he was the miserable hero. He died in blissful unconsciousness of all the evil attached to his name, of all the scandal that surrounded his last hours. His wife heroically defended him against the intrusion of any stranger who might by an unguarded word have aroused his suspicions. His son remained always vigilant near his arm-chair, and spoke to

him of hope and of future glories coming to pile themselves on those he had already achieved. In his affection, his filial devotion to his father, Charles de Lesseps was a hero, and even his worst detractors have bowed down before the courage with which he exposed himself to every reproach, and accepted every blame, in order to spare the old man who remained sitting in his arm-chair beside the fire, thinking of the successes of the past, and ignorant of the tragedy of the present.

One day I met Charles de Lesseps coming out of the Palais de Justice in Paris with his advocate. He shook hands, and when I asked him how things were going he smiled sadly and replied that he had lost every hope of avoiding a public trial of the directors of the Panama Company, but he hastened to add, and one could see how very much relieved he felt at the mere idea: "I have been given the assurance that my father will not in any case be implicated in the prosecution that is impending."

He was mistaken, his father was also dragged into the dock, and also sentenced to several years' imprisonment. Unfortunately for France her political men have not yet understood the necessity which ought to impose itself upon every nation without anyone trying to explain it to her—the duty of respecting its national glories, and shielding them from desecration.

One of the curious features of this lamentable Panama affair lies in the fact that the company's money went into the coffers of people who absolutely could do nothing for it, and who got into the habit of turning to it whenever they found themselves in want of ready cash for their necessities or even for their pleasures. It has been sweepingly asserted that scarcely one politician in the whole of France, no matter to what party he belonged, but had had recourse to it in order to replenish his exchequer. There were found some deputies

who, whenever they required money, managed to whisper in the ear of one or other of the many intermediaries through whom the business of corruption was going on that they were forced to make an interpellation in the Chamber concerning the management of the concern, which, of course, might bring along unpleasant consequences or revelations as to certain facts. Such an one was sure the next day of finding a cheque in one of his morning letters. Or it was a friend of some influential personage who declared that he had heard that such and such a measure was under consideration, which might prove harmful to the development of the company, or put some stumbling-block or other in its way, and that this had to be prevented at all costs. Of course *he* would not take anything for this, but he had to have recourse to a friend able to ward off the impending blow, and naturally that friend required to be remunerated for his work. Or again there was some necessary expense to be incurred in regard to the national defence, or to pay for some secret political services which the government in its incapacity and carelessness as to what were the real interests of France refused to undertake, partly also because it could not, without imperilling national safety, give to the Chambers the necessary explanations as to the reasons which rendered such expenses indispensable. The self-sacrifice of the company in taking upon itself such an outlay would entitle it to any reward it might care to ask in exchange, and so forth. Looking backward, it is difficult to understand the extreme *naïveté* which presided over every aspect of this singular adventure, and the credulity with which serious people like Charles de Lesseps, and his colleagues of the board, believed and were intimidated by all the old women's tales that were constantly being brought to them.

It would be hard to find a name among all those which

were prominent in political life at that particular moment of French history which was not mixed up somehow in the Panama scandal. At least one President and a foreign Ambassador were contaminated by the general infection that prevailed everywhere.

M. Rouvier, too, that strong character, was not free from suspicions of having looked into the coffers of the Panama Company. And what gives, to a certain extent, a shade of likelihood to the reproach which was hurled at him is the following fact, which I believe has never before been made public.

M. Rouvier had amongst his many enemies M. Flourens, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, an able, intelligent, and highly cultured man. M. Flourens did not care at all for M. Rouvier, in whom he saw a future rival, and recognised a powerful opponent. When some rumours reached his ears that things detrimental to the latter might be put forward in connection with the dealings of the Panama Company, he declared to a few personal friends that if such was the case he would not hesitate to make use of the knowledge, and to do his best to bring the delinquent to justice. The words were repeated to Rouvier, who smiled and said nothing. But somehow, a few days later, during a conversation with the same friend, to whom he had expressed his determination of being merciless in regard to his enemy, M. Flourens changed his attitude, and merely remarked that it was a great pity that sometimes outward circumstances, over which man had no control, obliged him to tolerate things that were repugnant to him, and to look through his fingers on facts which he could not disclose without harming superior interests. He then added that he had received a letter from M. Rouvier. When further questioned as to what its contents might be, he shrugged his shoulders, and replied : " C'est une lettre qui m'a désarmé, et qui aurait désarmé bien d'autres que moi." Months later,

General Tchérévine, head of the Tsar's secret police, received anonymously the original of this very letter, and never could discover, in spite of strenuous efforts, who had sent it to him. It was a short but expressive missive, and merely declared that in case Flourens did not hush up the rumours which accused M. Rouvier of having profited by the circumstances in which the Panama Company had found itself involved, he would speak publicly concerning the bribes that had been offered to and accepted by a certain Ambassador in Paris, and state their amount.

I have reason to believe that this letter was subsequently put under the eyes of Alexander III. by Count Voronzov, at that time Minister of the Imperial Household.

This mere fact that it became possible for the Ambassador of a Foreign Power to find himself mixed up in the sordid intrigues which gave such a special colouring to the Panama affair proves how wide were its ramifications, and how it had entwined itself around every element that constituted modern France. But though many had allowed themselves to be compromised in one way or another in this disgraceful story, it would never have attained the proportions to which it ultimately rose had not the Extreme Right party done its best to fan the general indignation, and to draw public attention to every incident even of the smallest kind connected with it. The leaders of this party did not hesitate an instant before the grave responsibility of exhibiting their national disgrace in the presence of an attentive and disgusted Europe, so great was their desire of ruining their opponents and overthrowing the Republic. But in the end the Panama scandal brought more disgrace to the people who had done their best to expose it than to those who had been its immediate cause.

I was talking about it some years later with a friend of

mine, a Frenchman of remarkable acuteness and singular clearness of judgment, who had been in Paris during the whole time the affair lasted, and had followed it very carefully, though not a politician himself. I asked him what impression it had really produced upon the saner elements of the French nation, who had looked upon it from the distance.

"It has consolidated the Republic," was his prompt reply.

"How is that possible?" I inquired.

"It is easy enough to understand," he explained to me. "Popular sympathy generally goes to the victims of a cause rather than to those who have brought them to the scaffold, be it that of public opinion or any other. In this case it was the Republic which happened to be the victim, and the so-called Monarchist or Right party who were the denouncers. They both benefited in their respective positions, but the people, who generally judge of things according to their own standards, asked themselves what was the object that was sought by the disclosures.

"Corruption has existed everywhere and always. We find it written upon almost every page of the world's history, and it is nothing new to see politicians allowing themselves to be influenced by the golden calf. Why, even Moses's priests bent their knee before it in the desert. But the fact that they have done so does not mean that the whole nation to which they belong has followed them in their errors.

"The great mistake in this Panama affair has been that we have tried to make France and the Republic responsible. It is but seldom that a government is corrupt, and it is not guilty of the faults of those who lead it. A government is a principle; men, even though ministers, are apt to fall and to commit reprovable and even criminal acts. But why accuse a régime of the actions of a few among those who represent it, why especially shut one's eyes to the fact that

this Panama comedy or drama, call it what you like, was nothing else but one of the innumerable political intrigues of this or that party against the existing order of things? We have often discussed Boulangism; well, the Panama scandal was simply another Boulangist conspiracy under a different name. It may have disgraced some individuals, it has not taken anything away from the grandeur of France or from the merits, such as they are, of the Republic. Believe me, my friend, it is not by singing the ballad of Madame Angot that a King will re-establish himself at the Elysée. In order to do this, something more than a 'collet noir' and a 'perruque blonde' is needed. A man is required, and so far I have neither met nor seen him."

## CHAPTER XXIII

### Two Presidents

From a constitutionally Republican point of view, M. Sadi Carnot, about whom already I have said a few words, made an admirable Head of the State—honest, dignified, strictly observant of his duties; of unfailing tact, and with neither slur nor blemish either in his political or in his private life. He knew how to hold himself in public, was moreover a fair speaker and a very well-read man. But he had nothing about him capable of provoking enthusiasm among the masses. His cold attitude, indeed, which drew on him the nickname of "the President with a wooden head," did not appeal to the nation. He was generally respected and esteemed, he was even liked, but he never became popular, and the impression he produced on outsiders, and those who only saw him performing his functions, otherwise never being brought into contact with him, can be summed up in the remark made by a little schoolgirl who, on one of his provincial *tournées*, had presented him with a bouquet of flowers, and whom he had kissed: "Il ressemble à la poupée de cire du Musée Grévin, que l'on m'a montrée à Paris, seulement il est moins joli" ("He is like the wax doll of the Grévin Museum I was taken to see in Paris, only he is not so handsome")

In spite of this drawback M. Carnot would very probably have been re-elected had his career not been cut short by the knife of Caserio. By a strange irony of fate, this Republican, whose ancestors had helped to overthrow royalty

in France, died the death of a King. The odiousness of this crime is still remembered. It was a crime for which even the most rabid anarchists could not find excuse. With the murder of the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, it remains one of the most inexplicable crimes of modern times, and even political hatreds cannot justify it. M. Carnot was universally regretted, even by those who did not sympathise with him.

His sudden death left the field open for a race to the Presidential chair, which probably would not have been so fierce had the election of the Head of the State taken place under normal conditions, or had he even succumbed to illness or natural causes. No one had any thought of the possibility of a Presidential election, and neither Radical, nor Republican, nor the Monarchist parties had a candidate ready to step into the place left so suddenly vacant. When the Congress assembled at Versailles no one had the least idea who, among the eligible politicians of the moment, held most chances to succeed the murdered President, and the election of M. Casimir Périer was due, perhaps, more to the lack of any suitable competitors than to his own merits.

M. Casimir Périer was a remarkable man in his way. He came from a good bourgeois stock, such as had played an important part in political life at the beginning of the great revolution of 1789. It was in the castle of his grandfather, Vizille, near Grenoble, that the first revolutionary assembly of provincial states had taken place. Later on, his grandfather had been head of the Cabinet under Louis Philippe, and for more than a century the Périers had been conspicuous in France. Casimir, moreover, was extremely rich, which fact gave him an independence such as very few political men of his generation could boast. He had been born and bred in a most refined atmosphere, and always moved in the very best

society, so that he found himself at his ease when he entered the Elysée.

His wife also was a most distinguished woman, who bore herself like a queen, and who had dispensed not only a semi-regal hospitality in her own house, long before she was called upon to continue doing so as the first lady in the land, but who, all her life, had also understood the duties towards the disinherited of this earth which a great fortune carries along with it. She was universally respected on account of her private virtues and blameless life, and she brought to the Elysée an atmosphere of elegance and refinement greater even than existed during the days when the Duchesse de Magenta had presided over its destinies.

The advent of the Casimir Périers did away with the reputation for meanness and dullness that had clung to the receptions of the Head of the State ever since the days of M. Grévy and his estimable but commonplace wife. Once more people belonging to the upper classes returned to the Presidency. M. and Mme. Casimir Périer visited a great deal, accepted invitations to Embassies and to the houses of members of the Cabinet; they received frequently too, and made themselves extremely well liked in fashionable Paris.

In spite of this, however, the new President did not find his position pleasant or easy. He had an authoritative character, and liked to have his own way, and also to discuss with his ministers the decisions which they submitted to his signature. He had been reared under strictly constitutional principles, but he was also very well aware of his rights under the Constitution of France, and had not the least intention of forgoing them, or of abandoning one single iota of his prerogatives. He was determined from the outset not to allow himself to become a mere figurehead in the government, but to make use of his privilege to be put *au courant*

of everything that was being done around him. His was essentially a fighting temperament, and it was bound to bring him into conflict with his ministers, who had been accustomed to the resignation with which both M. Jules Grévy and M. Sadi Carnot had acquiesced in everything that had been proposed to them.

Much has been said concerning the resignation of M. Casimir Périer, and for a long time it was believed even among people who ought to have known better that he had retired owing to threats which the German Ambassador, Count Munster, had uttered at the time of the first Dreyfus affair. I have strong reasons to believe that it was nothing of the kind which influenced him. The legend of Captain Dreyfus having been a German spy exploded long ago, and Count Munster never found himself under the least necessity of resorting to threats, though with a certain amount of justice he may have felt disgusted at the way the person of his Sovereign was dragged into the disreputable affair.

The sole reason of M. Casimir Périer's retirement lay in the sincere conviction that very soon got hold of him, that he would not be allowed to do what he liked, or even to attempt to resist the rising tide of Radicalism which he would have preferred to keep down. He was rich, independent, and of an easy and lazy temperament, which made him impatient of the resistance which his best intentions met from the very people who ought to have appreciated them.

He soon realised that if he clung to position he would be overturned as were his predecessors, Marshal MacMahon and M. Thiers, and rather than be told to go away he preferred to take leave of uncongenial colleagues, and to retire with all the honours of war. He had made many friends during his short tenure of office, but had also contrived to acquire many enemies, and somehow the fact of the existence of

these last jarred upon his nerves, influencing him perhaps more than it should, because those in high places have no right to be too sensitive. One cannot change one's character, however, and that of M. Casimir Périer could not brook the thorns which were entwined with the roses that strewed his path. He showed, on his retirement, an obstinacy with which he has been very bitterly reproached by his personal friends, for he did so in spite of the supplications of all who composed his immediate entourage. He declared he should go away, and go away he did.

He had been on very good terms with all the foreign Ambassadors and diplomats accredited at the Elysée, and these, one and all, bitterly regretted his departure. M. Casimir Périer had tact and great knowledge of the world, a quality that his predecessors more or less lacked. Perhaps it was from this cause that during the few short months of his Presidency the relations of the French Government with the German Embassy had become more cordial than had been the case since the war.

Talking of the German Embassy, I have already mentioned Count Munster. He was a great friend of mine, and perhaps one of the ablest men, under his lazy indolent manner, that the German diplomatic service has ever possessed. His wife having been English, he liked England better than any other nation, not excepting his own, in certain cases. He looked like an Englishman, too, and nothing pleased him more than to be taken for one. Essentially a grand seigneur of the old school, he was incapable of meanness, and even in his diplomatic relations he always avoided saying anything that he did not really think or believe to be the truth. Placed in a very delicate position in Paris, where German diplomats were strenuously avoided by all those who were not obliged to receive them, he contrived even there to make

a position for himself, still better, perhaps, than Prince Hohenlohe, notwithstanding the fact that the latter had relatives among the society of the Faubourg St. Germain, where he had been warmly welcomed before the war, but which gave him the cold shoulder when he returned to Paris in an official capacity after the disasters of 1870. And yet Prince Hohenlohe had far more conciliatory manners than Count Munster, and was a far pleasanter man in social relations; also, perhaps, he had more shrewdness than the latter, and certainly was more amenable to compromise if the necessity for such occurred. But the Count made himself respected wherever he appeared, I mean respected in the sense that he conveyed the impression that he would never allow himself to be trifled with, whilst always ready to meet his opponents in everything except in yielding to them.

This digression has led me far away from M. Casimir Périer and his retirement from public life, and I must return in order to relate the circumstances which followed upon his resignation. To say the least of it, his action considerably embarrassed not only his ministers, but also the leaders of the different parties in both Chambers.

For the second time within one year the country was called upon to elect a President of the Republic, and for the second time the event came as a total surprise upon France and upon its politicians. Once more candidates made themselves heard, and once again, in presence of those who pretended that they had the best right not to be passed by in this political Derby, an outsider won the prize, and M. Félix Faure, about whom no one had thought, was elected to the Presidency of the French Republic.

M. Félix Faure was chiefly known because he had been vice-president of the famous Ligue des Patriotes, the president

of which was then, and till his death in the early months of 1914, the ardent Paul Déroulède. This fact alone would have been sufficient to excite the apprehensions of Germany, and M. Faure understood this so well that he at once made up his mind to pose outright as a partisan of the Russian alliance, that dream of all French political men ever since the establishment of the Third Republic.

M. Félix Faure was far from being a stupid man: he had his points of ridicule which perhaps did him more harm than real defects would have done. He had vanity to an inordinate degree, loved luxury and splendour, and enjoyed the external advantages of his new position with an almost childish joy. He fondly imagined that he had been born to the purple which had been thrown upon his shoulders, and without the instincts of a parvenu he yet behaved like one.

He had, however, a far greater knowledge of politics than he has ever been given credit for, and he was a sincere patriot, though his patriotism was an essentially selfish one. It is to be doubted whether he ever would have reconciled himself to a return to the life of an ordinary citizen, and perhaps the greatest luck of a life which was very lucky, when all is said and done, was his death when still in the enjoyment of the privileges of a position he had grown to love.

But I repeat it again, he was no mean politician. It was under his tenure of office that the Russian alliance was established, and he certainly showed keen perspicacity in the way in which he contrived to bring it about, as well as by the perseverance he displayed on this occasion.

It was M. Faure who first thought of sending the French fleet to Cronstadt, and it was he who insisted on the great reception that was awarded to the Russians when their fleet came to Toulon. It was he, also, who first tried to win over the Russian Ambassador, M. de Mohrenheim, to his views on the

subject, and who did not hesitate to resort to all kinds of diplomatic arguments in order to win his interest.

Later on M. Mohrenheim gave himself all the credit for the result of the conferences which took place at that particular time between him and M. Faure, conferences about which the world heard nothing, and suspected even less. But though Russian diplomacy prided herself upon having hit on this brilliant idea of a *rapprochement* with France, as a safeguard against the ambitions of the Triple Alliance, the fact remains, and is well known to all those who have been behind the scenes of what was going on in Europe at that particular time, that it was in France that the idea originated, and that this idea had been carefully entertained and impressed upon the French nation by none other than M. Félix Faure.

Apart from any statesmanlike leanings and aspirations which did exist in him, he was drawn towards it by his own personal vanity, and the desire to be able to welcome in Paris as his guests, first the representatives of the most autocratic Sovereign in the world, and later on that Sovereign himself, by whom he, the son of a Havre tanner, would be treated as an equal. That would be a triumph indeed, and in order to obtain it he used every effort to break through all the barriers which existed between the realisation of his dream and the hard reality.

Huge sums of money were spent at that time both in France and in Russia in order to prepare the public mind, through the press, for this extraordinary turn in the politics of both countries. The campaign was engineered with consummate skill, and very few people saw through it. It very quickly brought about the wished-for results, and might have done so even more quickly had it not been for various indiscretions committed by M. Mohrenheim, whose personal wants were sometimes ahead of the march of events, and who allowed himself

upon one or two occasions to let his impatience take the upper hand of his prudence, and in order to satisfy those for whom he worked to attack with violence certain French politicians whom he feared might prove rebellious against the efforts which were being made. He tried, therefore, to oblige them to walk in the path mapped out for them.

One of these two occasions arose when M. Clemenceau, who already at that time had made for himself an eminent position in the ranks of the Radical party, whose leader he was supposed to be, uttered some doubts as to whether the French Government was not going too far in its advances to Russia, and was compromising the dignity of France without feeling sure that its conduct would be reciprocated on the banks of the Neva. Alexander III. was reigning still, and it was very well known he had no sympathies for Republics in general, and many people believed, together with Clemenceau, that though the Marseillaise had been played at the State dinner which was given at Peterhof in honour of the French naval squadron anchored at Cronstadt, things would not go further, and the Tsar would hesitate a very long time before he would condescend to admit Marianne in his intimacy, and to walk hand in hand with her, amidst the crowned heads of Europe, whilst they stood aghast at the unexpected spectacle.

Furious to discover that the doubts uttered by M. Clemenceau had found an echo among many prudent French political circles, Baron Mohrenheim, in his impatience, unburdened his outraged feelings to the Marquis de Morès, that fierce adversary of everything that had to do with the Republic and its partisans. Morès did not hesitate to say openly that it was the Radical party in France that was doing its best to prevent an alliance with Russia, for which the latter country was yearning. Upon this Clemenceau,

indignant and never behindhand on occasions when he could attack someone, took up his best Toledo pen and wrote to the Russian Ambassador the following letter, which certainly deserves not to fall into oblivion, where it has remained these long years:

"*Paris, September 7th*, 1892.

"MONSIEUR L'AMBASSADEUR,—In a letter that has been made public, the Marquis de Morès declares quite positively that you have exchanged with him the following remarks: 'We do not know in Russia with whom we can treat here. The greater number of public functionaries and officials and the whole of the press is in the hands of the Jews, or of England. I have not sufficient money to be able to fight them, whilst England is prodigal with hers. Clemenceau is openly attacking, in the corridors of the Chamber, the alliance with Russia; I am getting very uneasy, the more so that I do not see upon whom I could eventually lean in case of necessity.'

"I only desire to notice in these words of yours the part which refers to myself.

"I cannot allow you, by reason of your official position as Ambassador, to attribute to me publicly language of that kind without declaring to you that you have been misinformed.

"When the Tsar stood up to listen to the Marseillaise, I was, as all Frenchmen were too, justly proud at this public homage rendered to my country. Before the whole of Europe, looking attentively at what was taking place on that day, the French nation put her hand loyally into the hand that had stretched itself towards her.

"It is not my place to discuss with you, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, the consequences of the events which have taken place at Cronstadt; all that I can say is that no one desires

more ardently than I do that these might prove beneficial for both nations, and also for the whole of Europe.

"Any excesses of zeal connected with such a noble cause find most certainly their excuse in that cause itself. It is only to be regretted that they also might harm it. It is for that very reason, I do not doubt, that by thinking the thing over you have already convinced yourself that the ancient precept of '*Ne quid nimis*,' especially when such important interests are at stake, is an excellent safeguard.

"As concerns myself, I put it into practice to-day. You are our honoured guest, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur; allow me not to forget it, and to beg of you to accept the assurance of my most respectful feelings.

"(Signed) GEORGES CLEMENCEAU."

This letter considerably embarrassed Baron Mohrenheim, the more so because he did not reply to it immediately: after it had been published by the Agence Havas, the papers took it up, and different reporters called upon the Russian Ambassador to ask him for explanations. He gave them but lamely, thus making himself more ridiculous. For instance, he declared that he had been away from Paris when it had been brought to his secretary, Baron Korff, and that the latter had forgotten to deliver it to him immediately upon his return, so that he had only learned its contents through the press. In fact, he made many groundless excuses and only added to the embarrassment of the position. At last on the 12th of September the Agence Havas published the following reply from the Russian Ambassador to the leader of the Radical party in the Chamber:

"*Paris, September 12th*, 1892.

"MONSIEUR LE DÉPUTÉ,—The Agence Havas publishes a letter which you have been kind enough to address to me

on the seventh of the present month. On that day I was at Aix-les-Bains, which I left on the next day, Thursday, to return to Paris only yesterday, Sunday.

"I hasten to inform you that your letter has not yet reached me to-day, otherwise you may rest assured that I would have eagerly taken this opportunity to express to you my most sincere thanks for it.

"Nothing could have afforded me greater satisfaction than to be able to convince myself thus of the real and frank feelings of sympathy which you express to me for my country, and to read about the good wishes which you add in it towards the prosperity of a cause common to us both and dear to us both, thus doing away with misunderstandings, and making them henceforward impossible. As you express yourself, Monsieur le Député, '*Ne quid nimis*' ought to be the motto of us both, and as you may well believe, I have had more than one opportunity to remember it in many circumstances which I have witnessed during the long years of my public life, a life that has always been devoted to the different tasks I have been entrusted with.

"Will you kindly receive, Monsieur le Député, the assurance of my distinguished and devoted consideration.

"(Signed) BARON DE MOHRENHEIM."

In publishing this reply of the Russian Ambassador, the Agence Havas added that M. Clemenceau had hastened to inform it that his letter had been handed over to the secretary of the Baron, M. de Korff, on September 8th, who had given an undertaking that he should deliver it personally to the Ambassador immediately upon the latter's return to Paris. In spite of the frantic efforts made by the Russian and French Governments to minimise the impression produced by this correspondence, the prestige of M. de Mohrenheim suffered

considerably from its publication, and he had perforce to become more careful in the future.

But he was not removed from his post. Indeed, it very rarely happens that a Russian official is obliged to retire into private life by reason of his public mistakes. The Russians are an enduring people. The Baron was to witness many other triumphs, especially that of being able to welcome Nicholas II. and his consort in Paris, which event considerably added to his personal prestige, and also to his personal advantages.

To return to M. Félix Faure, he went on quietly pursuing the course he had embarked upon, and preparing the ground for the great things which he felt himself called upon to perform in the near future. He was so sure of the ultimate success of his plans that he began to make ready the Elysée for the glories that awaited it. He drew largely on the credits put at his disposal for the upkeep of the palace, he tried to give to his household the appearance of a real Court in miniature, to train not only the officers and civilians attached to his person to perform their duties according to the old etiquette that had prevailed during the Monarchy, but also to put his servants, his stables, his kitchens, and the maintenance of the state with which he liked to surround himself on the footing he considered to be necessary to the Chief Magistrate of the Republic. He also—and this effort is perhaps the most meritorious of all those he made at the time—did his best to assimilate the habits and customs prevailing in the higher classes of society, and he succeeded admirably in doing so, helped as he was by the numerous fair ladies at whose shrine he worshipped.

But where he showed the greatest tact was in avoiding incidents like the one which we have just related concerning M. de Mohrenheim. Had he been President of the Republic

at the time it occurred, he would certainly have been made aware of the possibility, or rather the likelihood of its happening, and taken measures to avoid its reaching public knowledge. The alliance with Russia, which was in the air when he was elected to the Presidency, and which during the term of M. Carnot had been started in a preliminary manner by certain influential people, was in part his personal work. I have said that it was he who had first thought of sending the French fleet to Cronstadt. He was at that time only a minister, and did not dream of ever becoming Head of the State, but he saw already looming in the distance the great things which were bound to follow for France in the event of the public recognition of its Republican Government by the most powerful Monarch of Europe, and he felt that something of the glory of such an event was bound to cling to his own humble person, which might, thanks to this circumstance, come forward more brilliantly than he could have hoped for when he first entered public life.

He was to reap his reward, and he must have realised it on that lovely autumn day when he went to receive Nicholas II. and his Consort at the railway station of the Bois de Boulogne in Paris. As he drove along, sitting opposite to them in the Daumont with outriders, in which they made their State entry into the French capital, he may well be pardoned if he forgot the beginnings of his political career, and the modest villa where his early days had been spent at Havre. Can one wonder if he lost his head a little, in the presence of that unhoped for success, and that, having such an opportunity to be on equal footing with a real Sovereign, he forgot sometimes that he was not one himself?

## CHAPTER XXIV

### Imperial and Presidential Visits

M. Félix Faure had been but a short time President when the Emperor Alexander III. died in such an unexpected manner. This untoward event interfered with the advances France had in contemplation; indeed, already in Paris there had been talk of Russia as *la nation amie et alliée*. But, on the other hand, the obsequies of the Emperor gave the French Government an opportunity of manifesting its sympathies with Russia. A special military mission, headed by General Boisdeffre, at that time head of the General Staff, was sent to St. Petersburg, where it remained until the marriage of the new Tsar. It was not only made much of by those who favoured a *rapprochement* with France, of whom there were a considerable number in Russian society, but thanks to the ability of the French Ambassador, Comte de Montebello, was also brought into contact with leading Russian politicians.

It was then that the conditions of a defensive alliance between both countries came under serious discussion. The new Emperor showed himself unusually gracious to all the members of the mission, and when General Boisdeffre timidly remarked that the President of the Republic would be envious of the honour he had experienced of being brought into personal contact with His Majesty, Nicholas replied, half jokingly and half earnestly, that perhaps he would pay a visit to the President in Paris, which city he had a great desire to see.

These words raised roseate anticipations at the time, and later on were seized upon by the French Government and construed into a promise made by the Emperor Nicholas II. to visit M. Félix Faure, then President of France. Nor was the Emperor allowed to forget. General Boisdeffre returned to Russia some sixteen months later for the Coronation of the Tsar, and there, together with Comte de Montebello, had many serious conversations with Prince Lobanoff, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and with General Obroutscheff, then head of the Russian General Staff, who, being married to a Frenchwoman, was one of the staunchest supporters of an alliance with France. At a direct result of these interviews, Nicholas II. was induced to promise that his visits to European Courts on the occasion of his accession to the throne would include one to Paris.

When the news became official, the enthusiasm it excited among all classes in France was absolutely indescribable. I remember that one morning, as I was walking down the Champs Elysées, I saw two workmen, who were mending one of the lanterns of the Avenue, eagerly scanning a newspaper with a portrait of the Tsar, and heard one say to the other, "C'est celui-là qui va nous débarrasser des Prussiens" ("He is the man who will rid us of the Prussians"). The whole nation saw itself once more in possession of Alsace and Lorraine, and never thought about the impending Imperial visit as anything else than the first step towards that consummation.

In Russia, however, we did not care for it at all. It seemed humiliating to our national pride that our Sovereign should make the first advances to a country the government of which represented everything that was antipathetic to an autocracy like ours. When I say "we," I am talking of the saner elements of our country. In Russia, as well as in France, the anti-

German elements hailed the situation with joy, and hoped great things from a closer union of the two nations.

The Emperor on his side could not but feel flattered at the shower of praise and compliments that fell from the French nation and the French press. It tickled his fancy to be received in triumph in the capital of a Republican country, and to find prostrate at his feet its most rabid Radicals. He did not see, or did not care to see, the undercurrents that actuated this enthusiasm; besides, Russia wanted a loan, and wanted it under favourable conditions. The presence of the Tsar in Paris ensured the success of such an operation, and, as Henri IV. said, "Paris vaut bien une messe."

It is to be questioned which of the two countries indulged most in platitudes on this memorable occasion. France, at least, was actuated by the legitimate desire to recover her lost provinces, and she may well be forgiven if she allowed herself to be carried away beyond the limits of that courtesy which a great nation is bound to show to any foreign Sovereign who honours it with a visit. But Russia—— Was it worthy of her, was it dignified on the part of the Monarch so to stoop in order to get the money she wanted without the least intention to hold to the other side of the bargain, or to run into a war with Germany in order to gratify the feelings of revenge which animated the French nation?

Paris had turned out *en masse* to see the royal entry. It was a little after ten o'clock when the report of the guns of Mont Valérien announced the arrival of the Imperial train at the Ranelagh station. Immediately the crowd began to cheer, long before they caught sight of the troops which escorted the carriage in which the Emperor and Empress, with the President, were driving. The French Government had chosen these troops with great care, and given the preference to the Spahis and Arabs from Algeria, whose picturesque

costumes and white burnouses added to the general splendour of the brilliant scene.

It was an event without precedent, this recognition by the only autocratic Monarch left in Europe, of a Republic from which hitherto foreign Sovereigns had more or less held aloof. It was bound to create a deep sensation, not only in France, but throughout the world; and its consequences promised at that moment to become stupendous. In reality they were absolutely insignificant, and France certainly played the part of the dupe in this queer comedy.

But it was not of this that Paris was thinking as it welcomed its Russian ally. When the mob saw the Empress, pale and lovely, in her white dress, with an immense bouquet of flowers reposing in her lap, as she sat beside her Consort, who wore the dark green tunic of the Preobragensky Regiment, with the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour across his breast, its joy overstepped all bounds; it was more like a delirium of mad enthusiasm than anything else. But it was in the Place de la Concorde that the manifestations became quite grandiose. And I must say that of all the popular demonstrations I have ever witnessed it was the most imposing. Row upon row of human beings were massed like shots in a cartridge, which seemed suddenly on the passage of the Imperial carriage to explode into one single shout, whilst opposite, under the waving flags and banners on the terrace of the Tuileries, long lines of officers in uniform stood looking on the scene over the heads of the crowd. The statues were covered with human beings, boys and men who had climbed upon them to have a better view of the procession.

Only one, that of the town of Strasburg, was undecorated, and its bareness seemed more than suggestive to the impartial spectator. When M. Félix Faure pointed it out to the Emperor the acclamations of the mob became deafening. It

was a triumph indeed, and if you had asked any one of these people why they were howling away their enthusiasm and joy, they would each and all have replied that it meant " Une Alsace Française," and that by his visit to Paris Nicholas II. was tacitly promising it to the French people.

The only one who appeared unconscious of the significance attributed to his visit was the Emperor himself. Perhaps he knew that whatever people might think, he was not going to risk the life of even one of his soldiers in order to gratify the wild hatred of France against his German neighbours; perhaps, also, he was merely amused by the bright scene that stretched itself before his eyes; or, maybe, he was thinking that it would have been a good thing had his own subjects showed such demonstrative joy whenever he showed himself in the streets of his own capital. It was something new to him to see the whole population of a great city let loose without police surveillance—at least, none that was apparent; a vast multitude who seemed only eager to catch one of his smiles.

Later on, however, a few discordant notes were heard, even before the Tsar had left Paris. For one thing, the most rabid Radicals reproached Nicholas with having called personally on M. Loubet, President of the Senate, and M. Brisson, President of the Chamber of Deputies. These visits were not in the programme of the journey, and people said that by making them the Emperor was identifying himself with the political opinions of these personages, which were held in suspicion by the Socialists, who had already become very powerful at that time.

On the other hand, the Conservatives were quite indignant to hear that at the reception given in his honour at the Hotel de Ville, Nicholas II. had cordially shaken by the hand a municipal councillor, who in long bygone days had made

himself conspicuous by sending an address of congratulation to Hartmann, one of the assassins of Alexander II.

Then, to crown all, the leaders of French society and of the Faubourg St. Germain, who had been invited to meet the Russian Sovereigns at a lunch given by Baron and Baroness de Mohrenheim, felt sadly chagrined that neither the Emperor nor the Empress had thought fit to address a single word to any of them, though there were present such great ladies as the Duchesse d'Uzès, the Duchesse de Luynes, and Madame Aimery de la Rochefoucauld.

But all these criticisms proceeded from the few. The many and the masses felt more than gratified at the unexpected honour which had fallen upon France. The enthusiasm was especially great after the toasts exchanged at Chalons between the Tsar and the French President, and to give an idea of the illusions which at that particular moment seized the whole French nation, with but very few exceptions, I will reproduce here a letter which I received one or two days after the departure of the Russian visitors from a political man who, by virtue of his official position, ought to have been able to judge of the consequences which this effervescence of the French public mind might have in the future, and which proves under what strange misconceptions some people were labouring:

"I am not at all of your opinion when you tell me that you deplore the facility with which the French nation has prostrated itself at the feet of the Cossack. What wind coming from the perfidious shores of Albion could have made you say such a thing? First of all, he is not a Cossack, this young Emperor of yours. On the contrary, he produces, together with his fair Egeria, an immense impression of greatness, seen, as he has been here, in the full sunlight of our intensive French civilisation, with his little girl in the background. As for the French crowds, they haven't, believe me,

prostrated themselves before him; they have only exchanged a long and passionate embrace with Russia; that is, with a Europe independent of the Prussian Empire. In this triumphal march of an Imperator towards our pseudo-Republican capital, the oldest and most experienced crowned foxes the world has ever seen have found their Tarpeian rock. Your young Imperial ephebe has emerged out of it admirably. Nothing that he has done has been out of place; he has shown simplicity, cordiality, good taste, tact, and everything, in short, that he ought to have done, without one single false note to mar the concert. In his place, William II. would only have shown the weight of his sword and invited us to test it. Nicholas II. is above all this, and has proved himself of stronger stuff. It is because, in the present case, the comedians, who generally act in presence of Her Majesty Humanity, are put to shame by another and newer spectacle, which is far more powerful than the old scene upon which they had been used to play since time immemorial.

"In spite of everything, real life will overthrow the false limits into which one has tried to confine it, and the Treaty of Frankfurt will share the fate of those of Paris in 1815 and of Westphalia. It was only real life that could have been strong enough to accomplish this superb effort, and to set itself up on the ruins of that old mischievous diplomacy which has produced that snake with three heads called the Triple Alliance.

"Only two nations could possibly have performed this miracle, and could have risen against the slavery in which, until now, Europe has been held in the bondage of the infernal policy of Prince Bismarck. He is the only real Cossack in the sense we generally attribute to that word, the Cossack before whom France, even when he vanquished her, has refused to prostrate herself, and against whom she has risen

with sufficient courage and sufficient strength to deliver from his yoke both Russia and the dynasty of Romanoff, and to snatch it from the sphere of Prussian influence. Our two nations have married each other without the help of any notary, and without the need for any written treaty, and their union means peace, real peace, against general war which Bismarck wanted to transform into a *status quo*. This is civilisation in the highest sense, and Europe owes it not to the fact that France has prostrated herself before Russia, but to the energetic manner in which the former has tried and succeeded in establishing its military strength, and redeeming its lost military prestige."

I have transcribed this curious letter in its entirety, as it can give, better than anything else, an idea as to the state of feeling which was prevailing in Paris in the autumn of the year 1896, when, for the first time since the fall of the Empire of the Napoleons, a foreign monarch was officially received with enthusiastic welcome within the doors of the capital. The enthusiasm was as false as the visit itself, but it cannot be denied that it gave greater stability to the Republic and considerably discouraged its enemies.

Nevertheless, nearly a whole year passed before M. Faure returned this memorable visit, and accomplished his passionate desire by being welcomed on Russian shores in his capacity of head of the French Republic. He arrived at Peterhof on a French man-of-war, escorted by a numerous and powerful squadron, and was received with a cordiality that must have considerably increased any illusions he may have had concerning the sincerity of the Russian alliance. St. Petersburg showed unusual enthusiasm, and the Imperial family treated him with a familiarity that must have ravished his parvenu heart. As he wrote to one of his friends in Paris, he held on his knees the little Grand Duchess Olga, to whom he had brought the

most splendid present of dolls any Imperial child ever received, and the fact of having thus nursed in his arms the youngest member of the Romanoff family evidently appealed to his feelings. He began to think himself equal to all these crowned heads with whom he found himself so unexpectedly thrown into contact, and to believe himself the real Sovereign of France.

It was dating from this famous visit that M. Faure assumed the semi-royal manners which considerably displeased many of his former friends, and caused him to be ridiculed more than he deserved in the popular cafés chantants of Paris. And, strange though it may appear, the real popularity which M. Faure had enjoyed until the period of his return from Russia began to wane. The public reproached him for not having made the most of his opportunities and for having forgotten, in his childish joy at the grandeur and magnificence of the reception awarded to him, the real object of his visit. Disappointment at the failure to convince Nicholas II. of the necessity of immediately declaring war on Germany began to make itself felt among the French nation, and, little by little, both the influence of M. Faure and the sympathy for Russia began to disappear among the public, which realised that all the fuss proceeded from the simple desire on the part of Russia to get the money she wanted at a cheap rate.

I had been away on leave for a few months when I returned to France, and on the very day I reached Paris I happened to meet the person from whom I had received a year before the letter which I have reproduced. I could not help asking him whether he still was of the opinion which he had professed when he had written to me that enthusiastic anticipation of the establishment of a solid alliance between France and Russia for the special purpose of a joint attack against Germany.

I found him furious against M. Faure, to whom he attri-

buted the delay. Another President, he asserted, would have laid down positive conditions before he had consented to pay a visit to Peterhof, and made it subservient to a promise of immediately beginning hostilities against Germany. When I objected that, in common courtesy, M. Faure could not have excused himself from accepting the invitation that he had received personally from the Russian Emperor, my friend replied in those characteristic words: "Je ne vois pas la nécessité de cela, au contraire, M. Faure aurait souligné la dignité de la France, en prouvant qu'elle ne se dérange pas pour rien" ("I do not see the necessity for it; on the contrary, M. Faure would have given a proof of the dignity which prevails in France if he had shown that she does not put herself out for nothing").

This phrase, coming as it did from a man who was at the period playing an important part in French politics, will give an idea as to the opinions which began to prevail against M. Faure.

The Dreyfus affair, which began at that period, intensified it. He did not, however, live to realise this. He seriously believed himself to be the right man in the right place, which, in a certain sense, he was, because of all the Presidents who have held office during the forty odd years of the existence of the Third Republic in France, he was, perhaps, the only one that contrived to give it the illusion of a monarchy.

A great deal has been written concerning the sudden death of M. Félix Faure. It is unfortunately certain that it took place under much to be deplored circumstances. It is also certain that the manner of his death has thrown upon his memory an unpleasant shade.

Alas! alas! poor Yorick. In a Republican country the abuses of monarchy can but too often be met with, and in the case of M. Félix Faure these came very prominently to

the front. He played at being a small King, even so far as to allow, in a Republican country, the establishment of the old custom of there being always "une favorite de roi" at his side.

But I must say once I am touching on that subject that I do not believe for a moment the assertions of the lady in question, that M. Faure used to consult her in political matters, and that she had great influence over him in that respect. M. Faure was an exceedingly shrewd politician, and knew perfectly well what he was about. He was also perfectly aware that he had numerous enemies who, if they had been able once to prove that he was confiding gravest matters of State to the discretion of another, would not have hesitated to make use of this fact to overthrow him, or at least to put him in such a position that he would have been obliged to send in his resignation. And M. Faure cared for his position as President of the French Republic, and would not have jeopardised it for anything in the world, least of all for a woman.

Perhaps it was as well for his own sake that death removed him from the political scene, before the curtain fell on the final act in the Dreyfus drama. What he would have done had he seen all that ensued after the discovery of the forgery of Colonel Henry, the knowledge of which made him so unhappy, and after the second condemnation of Captain Dreyfus at Rennes, it is difficult to say. Those who have known him well, told me that he had been very much troubled at the development this miserable business took so unexpectedly, and that he often regretted that he had not interfered and pardoned Dreyfus at the time of this first condemnation.

It seems that he had been very much tempted to do so, having always had some doubts in his own mind as to the Captain's culpability, but the President was also aware that

his own popularity was on the wane, and that voices had already accused him of trying to make up to the German Emperor.

This last fact deserves a few words of explanation. Some enemies of M. Faure had spread the gossip that his St. Petersburg laurels had not been sufficient for his inordinate vanity, and that as, in spite of all his conversations with Nicholas II. he had not succeeded in inducing the latter to consent to the adoption by Russia of an aggressive policy against Germany, he had tried to bring about some kind of arrangement with the German Emperor, and to persuade him to grant autonomy to Alsace and Lorraine. He knew that such a measure would have largely satisfied a certain section of public opinion in France. Serious politicians, however, knew very well that it was useless to hope that Germany would return without another war, and perhaps not even then, the provinces she had conquered at the cost of such stupendous sacrifices.

Whether M. Félix Faure ever nursed such a dream, it is difficult to say, but it was attributed to him, and for an excitable people like the French such a rumour was sufficient to set the tide against the President. Had he at that juncture pardoned Captain Dreyfus the outcry would have been immense, and the word traitor would undoubtedly have been applied to him. He knew it well, and perhaps this made him keep more aloof than he ought to have done from the net of intrigues which surrounded the tragedy of the Hebrew officer who was to draw on his person the attention of the whole world. But it is also to be regretted, perhaps, that the President found himself with his hands tied on this memorable occasion, and that in his dread of losing his position he forgot his constitutional prerogatives.

## CHAPTER XXV

### The French Press

In the visit of Nicholas II. to Paris the press played a considerable part. Indeed in no country of the world do newspapers wield such an influence as they do in France, where the bourgeois, the workman, and the peasant believe implicitly in what the papers say, especially if his particular news-sheet has the chauvinistic opinions which he himself espouses. It would hardly have been possible to organise the magnificent reception which was awarded to the Emperor of Russia, if newspapers of all shades had not contributed to it their long articles written in praise of the future visitor and in general of the Russian nation and the Russian army. These were material factors in securing the popular demonstration that took place. Thanks to them the Russian loans were covered several times over, and Russian policy, be it in the East or elsewhere, was warmly supported by the powers that ruled at the Quai d'Orsay.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs at that time was M. Gabriel Hanotaux, himself a writer of no mean talent, and a journalist in his spare moments. A few years later he was to be elected to the Academy for his fine work on the life of Cardinal Richelieu. M. Hanotaux was an excessively shrewd man, and moreover one who had a vast knowledge of the world; he understood better than anyone else the use to which the press, and especially the daily press, can be put. He organised a special service which kept the whole of France

informed as to the doings and sayings of the Russian Sovereigns, and was clever enough to give a spontaneous character to the vast manifestation of sympathy which threw France into the arms of Russia.

I don't remember now who said, very wittily one must admit, that "each country and each epoch has the press which it deserves." That phrase is far from being the paradox it seems, because it is an undeniable fact, and particularly so in France, that though the press leads public opinion, yet it is public opinion which leads the press into the road where its instincts—political or financial—tell it to go. And in the last twenty-five years the French, and especially the Parisian, press has undergone a total transformation. It is no longer what it was in the time of the Second Empire, when the restraining hand of the government was always more or less over its head. At present independence reigns among the papers that rule the boulevards, though this does not prevent the principal among them from accepting the inspirations which come either from the Quai d'Orsay or from the Place Beauveau. In the latter place, journalists had a good time of it during the few months when M. Clemenceau, the most brilliant among them, reigned as its master, and did not disdain to communicate to the press his views and his opinions on one or other of the questions of the day. The *Matin*, the *Journal*, the *Débats*, and especially the *Temps*, like to entertain their readers in an atmosphere favourable to the ministry which happens to be in power. The last-named paper has upon its staff men of the rarest literary merit, among others M. Tardieu, who writes the leaders on foreign affairs and of whom Prince von Bülow once said jokingly that there "existed in Europe three great Powers and—M. Tardieu."

That opinion had been endorsed long before it was uttered

by M. Adrien Hébrard, the greatest journalist that France can boast, and of whom she can justly be proud. M. Hébrard, if he had only wished it, might have become an important political personage, a minister, a member of the French Academy, but to all these glories he preferred the editorship of the *Temps*.

The paper is Republican in its opinions, with sometimes a leaning towards Radicalism, and stronger leanings still towards anti-Clericalism. At the same time, it has constantly displayed coolness in its judgments, and has always abstained from exaggerations either in one sense or the other. It has never failed in courtesy towards its antagonists, and has made itself respected, even when it has caused itself to be disliked. Everyone in political or social circles reads it with interest, and very often the news which it gives *en dernière heure*, as it is called, has a European importance, and is cabled all over the world. Its chronicles also are something more than those of other papers, and its dramatic weekly letter decides the success or failure of every new theatrical piece which sees the footlights of the principal Paris theatres.

Another serious paper, whose importance is almost as great as that of the *Temps*, is the old *Journal des Débats*, which is considered the organ of the Academy, and which certainly has always the last word to say concerning its elections.

In the *Débats* correct polished French is always to be found. It is grave, pompous, essentially bourgeois in its opinions, and is not read by the multitude.

The three great organs that have acquired front-rank importance are certainly the *Matin*, the *Journal*, its rival in everything, even in impudence, and the *Petit Parisien*. You will find many people in Paris who do not know the

*Temps*, except that they have seen it in the newspaper kiosks, you will find a great many more who do not know even that much about the *Débats*, but you will never come across any man or woman, to begin with your concierge, and to end with the foremost politician in the Chamber, who does not know the *Matin* and its chief editor and proprietor, M. Alfred Edwards, of Lanthelme fame. In the opinion of many the *Matin* is not a credit to French journalism.

More popular even than the *Matin* are the *Journal* and the *Petit Parisien*, whose proprietor, M. Jean Dupuy, has already been several times entrusted with a ministerial portfolio, and is a member of the Senate, where his opinion is always listened to with attention. The *Petit Parisien* has many editions, and is extensively read in the provinces. It instils into millions of people the Radical opinions which it professes.

One of the reasons why everybody who can wield a pen in France turns to journalism nowadays lies in this knowledge that it leads to anything one likes—and principally to politics, after which every Frenchman craves. In olden times every young man wanted to become a member of the Bar, persuaded that the Bar alone could lead him to the Chamber and thence to become a member of the government. At present journalists have it all their own way. I won't pretend to say that the change is by any means to advantage.

The general tone of the press lacks sadly of sympathy. Journalists like M. Hébrard become rarer and rarer every day. The press is no longer a tribune, it is something like the servants' hall of political life, and though its successes are greater than they have ever been they are not lasting, and they are forgotten the very next hour after they have reached their culminating height.

Politics, thanks to this degeneration, have become a hurried, feverish occupation, are more talked about than discussed, more felt than acted upon. Ministries, too, change far too often for France to work out her regeneration with anything like stability, and at present she is obliged to lean upon Russia, because only in so doing can she have any hope of remaining a Great Power.

There are, however, a few great journalists left on the banks of the Seine, and I am sure that no one will contradict me when I say that one of the first places among the few is occupied by that remarkable man, Arthur Meyer, the son of a Jewish tailor and the grandson of a rabbi, who by a strange freak of destiny has become the most fervent supporter of both Monarchy and Catholicism. He was associated with Boulanger and also with that most ardent of anti-Semites, Edouard Drumont, and, after having become the friend, adviser, and counsellor of the Comte de Paris, who had replaced Napoleon III. in his affections, succeeded in being admitted into the intimacy of the Duchesse d'Uzès and the noblest great ladies of the noble Faubourg, where at last he found himself a wife in the person of the charming but dowerless daughter of the Comte and Comtesse de Turenne.

Such a career is one of the most curious products of our times, and stranger still than its success is the fact that no one, save a few bad tempered people whose opinions do not count and to whom no one listens, has ever expressed the least astonishment at its development. Paris has accepted M. Arthur Meyer just as it accepted the Republic and the institution of the Concours Hippique; and Parisian society has acquired the habit of turning to him not only for news but also for the manner in which it ought to be received. He has become an oracle among certain circles, and his whiskers, his ties, and the shape and cut of his clothes

are copied not only by fashionable men but also by fashionable tailors. The morning coat of M. Meyer has replaced the frock coat of the Prince de Sagan, and the dinner-jacket of King Edward VII.

I quoted at the beginning the remark that every country has the press which it deserves. I can complete it by saying that every society has the leader that it merits. And Parisian fashionable circles can boast of having kept M. Arthur Meyer, though circumstances compelled it to lose Count Boni de Castellane.

I have mentioned the marriage of this favourite of the gods. People wondered at it excessively, but it would be extremely unfair to M. Meyer not to maintain that he decided to ask for the hand of Mademoiselle de Turenne under circumstances that were entirely to his honour. The young girl belonged to a family just as illustrious as it was poor, and though she had very rich relations, none of them attempted to do anything in her favour nor even to try to marry her in her own sphere. Arthur Meyer was a frequent visitor at the house of her parents, and had many opportunities of watching the revolts of a youthful mind disgusted at what it perceived of the injustices of the world. One day she told him that she did not know what she could do to escape the misery of her existence, adding that she knew that only two roads were open to her, either a convent or the free life of a woman who had put aside all prejudices and the principles in which she had been reared. "And," she added, "I don't want to become a nun, I have not got the courage to leave the society to which I belong, and I would never commit suicide. I have often wondered what I could do."

Meyer was above all chivalrous, and the despair of that young and lovely woman touched him deeply. He did not

love her, and he knew very well that she could feel no love for him, but he asked her to become his wife, and, after some hesitation, she accepted his offer. Of course society rose up in arms when it heard about it, but nevertheless neither her uncle, Count Louis de Turenne, nor her aunt, the Marquise de Nicolai, whose wealth could be counted by millions, ever tried by making her a small dowry to give her the chance of marrying within her own sphere.

And so, one fine autumn day, the son of a little Jewish tailor became the husband of a girl whose ancestry had helped in the making of some of the most glorious pages in the history of France. Verily, life holds strange surprises in reserve for those who care to watch it.

Arthur Meyer is altogether a curious type both as a man and as a journalist. One cannot help liking him even when one does not sympathise with his opinions, or with his person. He is an anomaly in everything, and no one would ever feel surprised at anything he might do or say. He has certainly forsaken his race and his creed, yet so thoroughly has he succeeded in impressing those who know him with his good qualities that he has never been repulsed for the light-heartedness with which he has burned the boats of his faith.

M. Arthur Meyer is the proprietor of the *Gaulois*, the fashionable organ of fashionable Paris, of the upper ten thousand who constitute Parisian society, that motley crowd in which unfortunately money is the only passport needed to ensure an entrance. It has one rival, the *Figaro*. The *Figaro* is extremely well informed, has contributors of great talent, and is as eminently respectable as that kind of paper can be which devotes a large part to gossip more or less good-natured. But it is no longer what that king among journalists, Villemessant, had made it.

Of papers in which popular passions are constantly appealed

to, and in which one only seeks the criticism of the existing government, only one, the *Presse*, deserves more than a passing mention, and that only because its editor was M. Henri Rochefort, who up to his death in 1913 always wrote the leading article which figures at the head of the paper. M. Rochefort was one of the most extraordinary productions of modern journalism, to which he gave a direction that had been unknown until he initiated it. His talent, which was essentially critical, bordering on satire when it did not frankly take that tinge, procured for him a celebrity which spread far and wide beyond the frontiers of France.

No one ever succeeded as he did in finding words that appealed to the mob, and which in a few words expressed so much. His *Lanterne* contributed more than anything else to the fall of the Empire, and Napoleon III., who knew humanity perhaps better than anyone else, did not despise him as an adversary, although his importance was denied by Napoleon's ministers and entourage, who advised him to pay no notice to the weekly attacks of the *Lanterne* against his person and his government. One day M. Rouher tried to minimise the influence of that sheet, saying that though people read it, its attacks were despised. The Emperor replied that he knew it, but, he added, " I am also aware that there exist women whom we despise but to whom, nevertheless, we pay attention."

There was a deep meaning in this simple phrase. Certain it was that all reasonable and well-thinking people despised the attacks against everything that others held sacred in which the Marquis de Rochefort Luçay continually indulged, but nevertheless the seeds blossomed in time ; indeed, no one more than himself contributed to discredit authority. By this Rochefort became the idol of the Parisian masses, and remained its favourite until his death.

# The French Press

I was very fond of M. Rochefort, and used to find great pleasure in spending a few hours in his company whenever I found an opportunity. Nothing could be more amusing than his conversation; the mixture of cynicism and irony that now and then came out in brilliant paradoxes full of wit if devoid of common sense, constituted something quite unique, which was bound to appeal to the imagination of his listeners, and make them smile even when they felt a sense of distaste.

He believed in nothing, not even in himself; respected nothing, loved nothing, but liked many things—his collections, his pictures, his work, the influence which he imagined that he wielded around him, and which in reality was not so considerable as he thought. And he never hesitated before uttering one of his bon mots, or writing one of his bitter scathing articles, even when he was perfectly aware that by doing so he was hurting innocent people—people who had done no wrong, and who had only incurred his displeasure by being either related or connected with those who had become the subject of his criticism.

The best description that one can make of M. Rochefort would be that he was "perfectly unscrupulous," and if he were still living I do not think he would deny that this was so. Rather, he would glory in it, because, as he once told me, "Dans ce monde il faut toujours mordre, ne fut ce que pour ôter aux autres la possibilité d'en faire autant avec vous" ("In this world one must always bite, if only to prevent others doing the same to you"). One could have replied to this remark that there are some mortal and some insignificant bites, and that it was not always the latter that he indulged in.

A curious peculiarity of M. Rochefort was that, fierce Republican though he pretended to be, yet he was inordinately

fond of his name and of his title, and a servant who would forget to call him Monsieur le Marquis would be dismissed instantly. Bereft of his parents, and so without experience of the affection of home life, his earliest days were most difficult.

Until he attempted journalism he had been a subordinate clerk at the Hotel de Ville, earning barely enough to keep body and soul together. He never forgot this period of his existence, and, whenever he allowed himself to speak about it, a bitterness showed itself which he could not keep within bounds.

One day, alluding to those dark and hopeless times, when he had spent many hours scribbling at some wearisome task, he said to me: "It is impossible for anyone who has not undergone it to imagine what it feels like to see the spring and not be able to get out of doors." The remark appeared to me almost too poetic to be the expression of a real feeling, but when I told him so, he replied quiet earnestly: "Evidently you have never experienced what it is to know that you are a drudge, although possessing the inner feeling that you are born to better things." I could not help then inquiring what his feelings had been when he was in prison, to which he exclaimed: "Oh, that was very different, one always comes out of prison, but sometimes one never escapes from the necessity of earning one's bread and butter by copying the stupidities which other people have written."

Before he died in July, 1913, the Marquis de Rochefort Luçay was a quasi-millionaire, the owner of one of the handsomest houses in all Paris, received everywhere that he cared to go, a desired guest, and an envied journalist. Even in his later days his pen was as sharp as ever, though perhaps it was no longer appreciated as was the case in the later days of the Empire.

He was often to be seen at the Hotel Drouot, attending the principal art sales of the year, where his knowledge of pictures and bibelots was highly appreciated. His life was like a fairy tale in many things, and in others like a dark nightmare. He made many foes, and kept few friends. Appearing to be everlastingly dissatisfied, he was yet one of the happiest men in the world—perhaps because he was one of the most selfish.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### The Presidency of M. Loubet

The death of M. Félix Faure took France greatly by surprise; the appointment of his successor astonished it even more. M. Loubet was President of the Senate, it is true, but his name had figured among those who had been mentioned in connection with the Panama scandal. This last fact was put forward by some people when the question arose of the candidature of M. Rouvier for the Presidency of the Republic, and caused it to be rejected. No one imagined, therefore, that it would be disregarded in the case of M. Loubet. He had many rivals, among them M. Brisson, M. de Freycinet, whose name came forward regularly whenever a Presidential election was about to take place, and the above-mentioned M. Rouvier. This candidate possessed a powerful personality and wielded an immense influence; his experience had been varied, and his intelligence was certainly one of the foremost in France. Had he been elected to the Presidency his appointment would have been received with great favour in Europe. On the other hand, M. Loubet was more or less an unknown person, supposed to be inoffensive and retiring, but possessed of a most violent anti-Clericalism, of which he had given every possible proof, in the hope that by these means he would make himself a *persona grata* with the Radical party, through whom he had secured the Presidency of the Senate, an office which hitherto had constituted the *summum bonum* of his ambitions.

# Presidency of M. Loubet

He had no wish to become President of the Republic, and it was with great reluctance he allowed his name to be put forward as a candidate. But he was under the influence of, or, what is even truer, dependent upon, M. Clemenceau. M. Clemenceau had lately come forward with considerable energy, especially since the Dreyfus affair once more was in the public mind, and he was such a considerable personage among the Radical party that they could not afford to disregard his orders or even his personal wishes.

M. Clemenceau was the Henri Rochefort of political life, with far more intelligence and almost as much wit as the director of the *Lanterne*, with an extraordinary force of character, very determined ideas, and about as few convictions as were indispensable to a man who had risen to the leadership of a powerful party. Moreover, he had real statesmanlike qualities.

He had no great sympathy for the Russian alliance, which his ever-ready wit had quickly discerned, when all was said and done, to be a very one-sided affair.

His sympathies were entirely English, and as such it was but natural he should not look with enchanted eyes upon a policy that was bound, by its close association with the diplomacy pursued on the banks of the Neva, to become antagonistic to that of the Court of St. James's. Perhaps it was for this very reason that he pushed forward the candidature of M. Loubet.

He felt, or rather he knew, that M. Loubet had had nothing to do with the visit of the Tsar to Paris beyond receiving him when he called at the Luxembourg in defiance of etiquette and precedent.

With a friend of his at the Elysée, the position of M. Clemenceau was perhaps even stronger than if he himself had been established within its walls. He had always admired

the personality of Père Joseph, so well known in the history of France as the adviser and counsellor of Richelieu. He intended playing the same part; to govern under M. Loubet's name as far as the constitution allowed him, to govern the Republic which he secretly despised, but to which he clung, because he knew that it was the only government under which he could do absolutely what he liked.

M. Clemenceau had taken a sincere liking to a very attractive and very beautiful lady. He is still on terms of great friendship with her, notwithstanding the fact that she is no longer young, and that white locks have taken the place of her golden curls. She is an American, the daughter of that Colonel Burdan who invented the rifle which still bears his name. She had married a French diplomat, the Comte d'Aunay, and was noted in her youth for her extraordinary loveliness Mme. d'Aunay was ambitious above everything, and her great dream was to see her husband become an Ambassador. She imagined that M. Clemenceau could help her to realise her one ambition, and she then set herself to win his friendship for herself and for her husband. The task was easy enough for a woman gifted with such beauty and such remarkable intelligence, and though the world chatted not a little—as so often it does without foundation—concerning this friendship, yet secretly it envied her for her cleverness in having won him as a well-wisher. Then one day came the crash and the blighting of the fair Countess's hopes. The French Ministry for Foreign Affairs became alarmed at the marvellous way in which M. Clemenceau was kept informed of what was going on in diplomatic circles at Copenhagen, where Count d'Aunay was accredited as French Minister, and wondered how he could be in possession of the most secret information before even it became known at the Quai d'Orsay. Inquiries

M. M. F. SADI-CARNOT

(President 1887–1894)

M. J. P. P. CASIMIR PÉRIER

(President 1894–1895)

M. F. F. FAURE

(President 1895–1899)

M. E. LOUBET

(President 1899-1906)

*All photos, Petit, Paris.*

were instituted which resulted in the resignation of certain parties.

It was partly Mme. d'Aunay who was responsible for the English sympathies of M. Clemenceau ; she had lived in London for a long time, had made many good friends, and also won still more admirers. She was ambitious to have her husband appointed to the British capital as Ambassador for the French Republic, and she did her best to persuade M. Clemenceau to set his back against the Russian alliance.

The great Radical leader did not ask anything else, but he was very well aware that to go against the popular feeling was quite useless and hopeless, and might even cause his own patriotism to be suspected. But he knew also that French people are apt to lose their illusions as quickly as they come under their influence, and so he quietly waited for the course of events to justify the words of warning he had uttered to the few friends before whom he could talk quite openly.

When he favoured the candidature of M. Loubet to the Chief Magistracy of the Republic, he had his plan quite ready, together with a programme which included an alliance with England and a rupture with the Vatican. Papal influence he dreaded the more in that he knew that in Pope Leo XIII. he had an opponent just as shrewd as he was himself, one who would consent to the greatest sacrifices in order to keep upon good terms with the Republic. To this last the Radical party was not at all agreeable, and consequently it was indispensable that he should assure himself of the sympathies of the President, whoever he might be, in order not to be thwarted secretly in his designs as earlier he had been by M. Félix Faure, whose policy had been far more personal than the world was permitted to guess.

I happened to be at Versailles on the day of the election of M. Loubet. An hour before the result became known bets

were still being taken concerning the chances he had to be elected. M. Rouvier was distinctly favoured, and probabilities pointed to M. Brisson making a close run. I was lunching at the Hotel des Réservoirs with some friends, of whom Henri Rochefort was one, when suddenly M. Clemenceau came by. He was instantly surrounded by a group of journalists eager to hear his opinion as to who would win. He laughingly parried their questions, saying that the only thing he was sure of was that Clemenceau would not be President of the Republic, to which Rochefort remarked in an undertone that he would not need to be, as it would be his candidate who would occupy that post.

M. Loubet was elected, and at once the Dreyfus affair took a new turn. After a struggle, in which the government yielded almost without fighting, the unfortunate captain was brought back to France, and his re-trial took place at Rennes, with the result known to everybody, and for which M. Clemenceau deserves the thanks of his compatriots as well as of posterity, because anything more iniquitous than this affair has never disgraced a country.

Most emphatically of all the politicians who were prominent in France at the time of the election of M. Loubet, M. Clemenceau was the shrewdest and also the most far-seeing. He had perceived that even had Captain Dreyfus been guilty, it would be to the advantage of France for him to be declared innocent, and also that so long as that bone of contention was left to the enemies of the Republic, they would expend all their efforts in using it as a weapon to discredit not only the form of government they disliked, but also to shame France herself.

One cannot say that the Elysée improved as regarded its inner life under the Presidency of M. Loubet. The pomp and grandeur introduced by M. Félix Faure were reduced to a

minimum, and existence began to resemble the one led by M. and Mme. Jules Grévy, with perhaps a shade more elegance, but without any luxury, save what was absolutely necessary. Madame Loubet rarely went out in anything else but a modest brougham drawn by one horse, and she avoided everything that could be construed as love of ostentation or luxury. On the other hand, she was extremely charitable, and, with the exception of the Maréchale MacMahon, no wife of a President of the Republic did more for the welfare of the poor of Paris, and by them she was literally worshipped. She was totally devoid of affectation, and never tried to pose for what she was not, or to play at being the great lady by birth as well as by position. Everyone liked and respected her. Such was not the case with M. Loubet, in whom some people saw a nonentity and others merely a puppet in the hands of M. Clemenceau and his friends.

During his tenure of office the new President paid several visits abroad, among others to St. Petersburg, London, and Rome. With the exception of the one to London, it cannot be said that his journeys were successful. In Russia people were getting just a little tired of the perpetual ovations which had been allowed to take place in favour of France and the French alliance. The Japanese question was already engrossing the public mind, and it was vaguely felt in the country, whatever one may have thought at the Foreign Office, that somehow France had failed in her friendship for her ally of the other day in the Far East, and had not sufficiently upheld her pretensions in the many entangled questions which had sprung up in consequence of the fatal policy of Admiral Alexieff and his friends.

The entire misunderstanding which had prevailed at the demonstrative Franco-Russian alliance was becoming more apparent every day; essentially it had been based on

the desire of each of the signatories to get as much as possible out of the other. France had fully expected that she would be given the opportunity of recovering Alsace and Lorraine, and Russia had only seen the possibility of borrowing, under favourable conditions, the money she wanted. As time had gone by Russia had found out that French bankers were just as exacting as were German bankers, while France had discovered that her interests were dear to Russia only insomuch as they did not clash or interfere with her own. A certain coolness had sprung up between them, though in Paris as well as in St. Petersburg politicians and journalists were eagerly seizing every opportunity to declare that the alliance was stronger than ever.

Under those circumstances the journey of M. Loubet to St. Petersburg might have been pleasant, but could not have been very useful. In London it was different. He found there many sympathisers and well-wishers who were only too desirous of accentuating the good relations of France with Great Britain. To begin with King Edward and to end with the man in the street, they all vied with each other to show the greatest cordiality to the President and to make him welcome in the fullest sense of the word. When M. Loubet returned to Paris he could say with pride and satisfaction that the old rivalries which had divided the two countries had been buried under the flowers which had ornamented the dining-table in the Waterloo Hall of Windsor Castle.

The Roman trip of the President, though conducted on simpler lines than those of his English journey, was perhaps the most important event of M. Loubet's septenary. It distinctly proclaimed the attitude which the French Government meant to adopt in regard to the religious question and to its relations with the Vatican. The guest of the Italian King

at the Quirinal, M. Loubet did not think it necessary to follow the example set by all the other foreign monarchs who visited Rome by going from the house of the Ambassador to the Holy See, as a neutral place, to visit the Pope at the Vatican. The courtesy paid to the head of the Roman Catholic Church by the German Crown Prince, and later on by the German Emperor, was deemed to be beneath the dignity of the President of the French Republic; and when the government was asked in the Chamber what M. Loubet meant to do in regard to this question of a visit to the Pope, it replied that it had been decided that the President should refrain.

Soon after this relations were entirely suspended between the Holy See and the French Republic, and the separation between Church and State became an accomplished fact. M. Loubet had not failed in the confidence which M. Clemenceau and the Radical party had reposed in him.

The principal feature of this septenary of a gentle and yielding little bourgeois was the establishing of the regular and automatic change of Presidents—a rule which gave to the Republic a stability which hitherto it had been wanting. M. Thiers had been overturned; Marshal MacMahon and M. Grévy had been obliged to resign; M. Carnot had been murdered, and M. Faure had died suddenly, whilst M. Casimir Périer had grown impatient at the restraint to which he found his faculties subjected. It was only dating from M. Loubet that the transmission of the supreme power became an accomplished fact, and that at last the Republic, as well as a Monarchy, had its Sovereigns whose reign was followed by that of their duly elected successors.

During his Presidency, too, the components of Paris society changed considerably. New salons sprang up which aspired to replace the older ones, and in a certain sense they succeeded in doing so. The bourgeoisie which Loubet represented so

well came to the front, and the newspapers, which hitherto had carefully noted the sayings and doings of the Duchess of So-and-So and the Countess of So-and-So, began to chronicle those of Madame Ménard Dorian or of Madame Alphonse Daudet, or of the wives and daughters of members and supporters of the government. Thus a new society began to play its part in Parisian social life, and soon entirely pervaded it. Financial houses, too, opened wide their doors to all who cared to enter, and whilst formerly the Rothschilds had been almost the only bankers with whom the old French nobility had cared to associate, dozens of Jews now invaded Parisian society. The distinction which used to exist formerly between the *noblesse* and what it had called disdainfully " les roturiers " had entirely disappeared under the glamour which millions always exert over the imagination of the crowds. It was felt that money was the principal thing required, and under this influence the Hebrew and the American element had a fine time of it.

It is impossible to write anything about Parisian society nowadays without saying something concerning M. de Castellane. For a few brief years he incarnated in his person the acme of French elegance, and was the *fleur des pois* of all the smart clubs of Paris. He was a terrible little fop who aspired only to one thing: to be the most talked-about man of his generation. When he married Miss Gould, he fondly imagined that this marriage gave him the right to do everything he liked, down to ill-treating his wife. He began buying right and left everything that caught his fancy, and built for himself a palace after the model of the Petit Trianon; he made Paris ring with his extravagances, and pretended to assume the part of the one supreme leader of society. Even the many millions which his wife had brought to him proved insufficient; and very soon his horses, his vagaries, his losses at cards,

and his general behaviour brought about a financial catastrophe, which was the prelude to a conjugal one. Mme. de Castellane became tired of being outraged at every step, and sued for a divorce, which was easily awarded to her.

Anyone in de Castellane's place would have resigned himself to the inevitable, but instead, he threatened to take the children from her. Madame de Castellane behaved nobly on this trying occasion. She might easily have retaliated, and she had got plenty of proofs which she could have produced that would have for ever compromised the Comte de Castellane and other people with him. She never made use of that power, and as her advocate, M. Albert Clemenceau—the brother of M. Georges Clemenceau—eloquently said: "My client has her hands full, but she disdains to open them in order to harm the man who, after all, is the father of her children!"

The Countess came out of this painful ordeal with flying colours. Her children were left in her charge, notwithstanding all the efforts of M. de Castellane. Soon after her divorce was pronounced she married a cousin of her former husband, the Duc de Talleyrand, the son of the famous Prince de Sagan. The couple lead a very quiet life in the palace erected by Count Boni, and at the Château de Marais, a splendid property which they possess not far from Paris. The Faubourg St. Germain, not approving of divorces, has turned the cold shoulder upon them, which fact does not trouble them much. They are happy in themselves, and the Duchess must often congratulate herself on her moral courage, of which she gave proof when she decided to seek her freedom from an ill-assorted union which had brought to her nothing but unhappiness and sorrow. As for M. de Castellane, he vegetates in an obscurity which must be doubly painful to him when he remembers the luxury in which he spent a few short years, and which he lost through his own vanity and stupidity.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### The Dreyfus Affair

When Paris at first began talking about the high treason of Captain Dreyfus, people did not take much notice; it seemed to be but one of many such. The public was more or less used to events of the kind, and did not give them more than a passing thought. I happened, however, to know some friends of the Dreyfus family, and, calling on one of them, I was not very much surprised to hear him declare that the Captain was innocent—the victim of an intrigue. Such language was perfectly natural on the part of relatives of the accused man, but these denials were also accompanied by several details which gave them more importance than, under different conditions, would have been legitimate.

For the first time I heard the name of Colonel Esterhazy as one who could have said a lot concerning this intricate affair had he cared to do so, and the impression left upon my mind by the conversation which I had on that day was strong enough to inspire me with the desire to be present at the coming trial. Consequently, I requested and, after difficulty, obtained from the War Office permission to be present.

I had never seen Captain Dreyfus before the day when I beheld him sitting in the dock listening to the evidence on the strength of which he was to be sent to the Devil's Island for five long years. I must say that his appearance did not draw out the sympathy of any onlooker who did not give him-

self the trouble to watch his countenance attentively. Indeed, had his appearance been more prepossessing, he would perhaps have met with more indulgence than was the case. But in the whole of my long life I have never seen a man with more strength of character and more power to keep his personal emotions under control. Not a muscle of his face moved during the time that witness after witness spoke of his presumed guilt; his eyes never fired up, even when he heard himself accused of a crime that he had never committed. The only words he spoke were uttered in a low tone, in which weariness more than anything else was apparent, and he never said anything else but the phrase, "Je suis innocent."

And yet it was impossible to look at him and not to realise that this indifferent man, whom nothing seemed to move, who had not even the strength to protest indignantly against the accusation hurled at him, was enduring a perfect martyrdom; that his apparent calmness was the calmness of despair. He knew too well that he could not prove his innocence, that he had been made the victim of other people's guilt, and that he was being crushed by the wheels of a Juggernaut, moved along by an inexorable fate. Once he started, and that was when sentence was pronounced against him, and when the words, "dégradation militaire," resounded in the room. A feeling of revolt appeared to shake him, and he made a gesture as if he wanted to rush forward; but it lasted only a second, and then he lapsed into his usual apathy, as if he had understood that his protest would only have added to the bitter feelings of revenge which the public manifested against him.

After judgment had been pronounced I had the opportunity of speaking to one of those who had given the verdict. I asked him whether he really believed in the Captain's guilt. The officer shrugged his shoulders and replied: "It is difficult

to say. Treason has taken place; and, after all, it is better to assert that a Jew has been guilty than to fix it on a Frenchman."

It seemed to me that these words gave the key to the undercurrents of *l'affaire Dreyfus*. Some people, whether sincerely or otherwise, believed that treason had been committed, and finding that it became incumbent to fix it on someone, preferred to take a Jew as a victim than one of their own brethren in race and faith.

At the time the affair began anti-Semitism was already very powerful in France.

Drumont had published his famous books, each rendered so stupid in one sense by the pertinacity with which he called a Jew every person whom he thought he had a reason for disliking; and so dangerous in another sense, by the way in which he appealed to all the evil instincts of the mob, and urged it to rise against people whose only guilt consisted in being rich.

The Clerical party especially did all that was in its power to fan the hatred against Jews, which had always existed in a greater or lesser degree. It accused them of inspiring all the anti-Clerical measures adopted by the various governments which had succeeded one another in the country. Also, it was foolish enough to seize the pretext of the Dreyfus affair to associate anti-Semitism with the question of the Captain's guilt or innocence, and thereby to excite public opinion against the Jews in general, more even than against the Captain himself.

On the other hand, the Radical party, which was gaining adherents every day, was delighted to be able to secure the support of the Jews in its struggle against Clericalism. They, therefore, hastened to accuse the Clericals of trying to prove the Captain guilty in order to be able to trace some association

between his supposed guilt and the actions of the numerous rich Hebrews in France.

It has been said that at the beginning of the campaign which was started in favour of Dreyfus, when someone asked M. Clemenceau what he thought about the whole affair, the Radical leader replied that he did not know yet what there was in it, but that he saw it could become an admirable weapon in the hands of the different political parties which existed in France.

That weapon no one better understood how to use than he did. His great ambition had always been to become Prime Minister, if not President, of France, but so far he had not seen any possibility of realising his dream. The Dreyfus affair gave him the opportunity he sought, and he was not the man to allow it to slip.

He engineered the whole campaign begun by M. Scheurer Kestner, when he proclaimed aloud that he had obtained the proofs of the innocence of Captain Alfred Dreyfus; he encouraged M. Zola to write his famous letter, " I accuse " ; he gave all the benefit of his experience to those whom he sent fighting for the cause which he considered to be more his than anyone else's, and in the end he reaped the reward of his unremitting zeal. To the Dreyfus case he owed finally the Premiership of France, a post which he had coveted all his life, and on the wave of this affair he would have been elected President of the Republic had he not found an adversary of importance in M. Briand, whom he himself had helped to come to the front without suspecting that he could become his rival.

A curious feature in the Dreyfus campaign was the celerity with which it became a personal matter with those who took part in it. One and all sought in its intricacies their own advantage more than anything else, and the Captain was very soon forgotten. Having been the pretext for furthering

innumerable personal ambitions, he was scarcely remembered whilst the fight for his rehabilitation lasted.

As an instance of what I have just said, I will relate an amusing incident. After the trial at Rennes, and when it became known that President Loubet had pardoned Dreyfus, I was dining one evening with a lady, Madame de ——, whose salon had been one of the strongholds of the Dreyfusards. Of course, the affair was discussed. Someone remarked that it was a pity that the accused man had not been acquitted, as it would have put an end to the whole sad and, in many points, sordid business, whereon our hostess exclaimed, " Oh, no, it is not a pity ; fancy how sad it would be if we had not a pretext for carrying it farther ! "

This hasty retort, which I am sure Madame de —— regretted later on, represented the opinion of most of the partisans of Dreyfus ; they forgot entirely the personal feelings of the victim of this injustice of political passion, and only sought in the agitation the furtherance of their own schemes and intrigues.

This Dreyfus campaign completely hypnotised every person who was drawn into its intricacies. Towards its close, I do not think that even among the principal actors of the drama one could have found one man or woman who really understood it, or who could speak of it without allowing their personal interest to interfere with the opinions held.

As for the real circumstances attending this curious episode in the history of modern France, I do not think that they will ever be known. It is certain that among some of the adversaries of Dreyfus there were several sincere people who believed that he was guilty. There were also others, quite as earnest, who professed the erroneous conviction, that once a mistake had been made this mistake ought not, for the honour of the army and for that of its generals, to be admitted.

Of course, this was a point of view which could never be accepted by anyone calling himself honest, but, in a certain sense, it can be understood though never excused.

Only the severest condemnation can be given to the means by which it was endeavoured to prove Dreyfus guilty, the hideous way in which each one among all those upon whom his fate depended not only refused to acknowledge error, but, on the contrary, tried everything that could be thought of in order to uphold the false theories as to his guilt.

During the time that the agitation for the new trial lasted, I had more than one opportunity of discussing the innocence of Dreyfus with several officers holding high commands, and I was horrified to observe the cynical way in which they tried to explain to me that it was indispensable that the decision of the Paris court-martial should be confirmed. When I asked them why, they always replied the same thing: "Les arrêts d'un conseil de guerre, ne peuvent être critiqués, cela leur enleverait toute autorité sur l'armée dans l'avenir." ("The decisions of a court-martial can never be criticised; it would deprive them of all their authority over the army in the future.")

I have never been able to make them understand that, however important the evidence, a court-martial can be mistaken just as well as other people.

Another remarkable side of the Dreyfus agitation is the rapid way in which it subsided and was forgotten, as soon as the Captain was rehabilitated, and granted the Cross of the Legion of Honour as a reward for his long sufferings. With the exception of a few people, such as Madame Zola and her immediate friends, all those who had taken a leading part in the struggle did everything that they could to induce the world to forget. M. Clemenceau himself was the prime mover in the general desire to consign to oblivion this episode in the

political life of the day. The latter, when he became Prime Minister, buried Zola in the Panthéon. The event was the occasion of a new misfortune for the ill-starred Captain Dreyfus, inasmuch as a Royalist and Clerical partisan seized this opportunity to fire at him a shot which slightly wounded him. The incident nearly gave rise to a panic among the assistants, who thought that a bomb had been thrown at President Fallières and the members of the government who were present at the ceremony.

Having paid this last homage to the writer who had lent the help of his powerful pen to the cause which he had so ardently championed, M. Clemenceau hastened to hide in the tomb of Zola every remembrance of the Dreyfus affair, although by it he had realised his every ambition. It had given him a popularity among French politicians of his generation which earlier he had been unable to obtain ; it had posed him before the world as something more than a clever man (which reputation he bore)—as a real statesman, able to treat on a footing of equality the statesmen of Europe—and it had paved his way to the Presidency of the Republic, that goal of his ambitions. Now all his desire was to drive away from the mind of the public the memory of the political campaign in which he had taken such a prominent part.

After burying in the Panthéon the mortal remains of the great author whom he had succeeded in persuading that it was his duty to protest in the name of France against the iniquity that had sent Captain Dreyfus in exile to Devil's Island, M. Clemenceau considered himself free from further obligations toward those who had been associated with him in the task of bringing Captain Dreyfus back to France, and restoring him to his family. He saw no reason to continue to meet them, and when Emile Zola's daughter married one of his former secretaries, he refrained from assisting at the

ceremony under the plea of ill-health, an excuse which appeared to be the more out of place seeing that it was announced in the papers that on that very day he had gone into the country for the shooting. The Prime Minister did not care that the world should think he remained faithful to those associations which had had for their only excuse the political necessities of the moment.

M. Clemenceau was one of many persons who had seen in the Dreyfus affair the possibility of becoming either famous or powerful through the energy with which they defended his cause. Many of the minor satellites had looked to it in order to emerge from the obscurity in which they would otherwise have remained to the end of their days. There was hardly a journalist in Paris who did not try to pose either as a Dreyfusard or the reverse; they became ferocious in their attacks according as their professed opinions differed. Everything which until that time had been considered sacred in France was dragged in the mire and became dirtier every day. Priests forgot their sacred character; soldiers did not remember the honour of their flag; politicians renounced the creeds in which they had believed; respect disappeared from the hearts of men and from the actions of the nation. One can say that France came out of this tragedy dishonoured before the world—diminished in her own eyes.

But Radicalism grew stronger during the struggle which waged between the friends and the adversaries of Dreyfus, and certainly it was owing to this struggle that anti-militarism became so prominent in France. It was this episode which taught the nation to despise the army and to rise against its discipline. From this point of view the campaign in favour of Captain Dreyfus did much harm to France, but from the moral viewpoint it is impossible not to admire the feeling of indignation which roused so many people against the in-

justice of a few. It is only a pity that this indignation was so often but the mask under which lurked ambitions that had nothing to do with the desire to see Captain Dreyfus righted.

Among all the people who were the actors in this drama, there are some whom it is impossible to pass by. One of them is Colonel Esterhazy, that dark figure who from accuser became the defender of his colleague, who certainly knew more about the hidden currents of the whole affair than anyone else, and who never spoke the truth about it, even when he turned upon his former superiors, perhaps because this truth would have been even more shameful for him than for those who had employed him.

I had occasion to meet Esterhazy before the disgrace which overwhelmed him after the Dreyfus trial. There was a time when he had been a dashing cavalry officer, much sought after in the most elegant of the many elegant salons of Paris. I had seen him at the Tuileries, dancing *vis-à-vis* with the fair Empress who reigned there, and later on I had the opportunity of watching him in several houses where we were both frequent visitors. He was an amiable man, full of wit, and exceedingly amusing in his conversation. As for his moral worth, no one troubled about it at that period, and though from time to time scandal of some sort became associated with his name, no one could have believed him capable of the dark deeds which later on stamped him with such a stigma of shame and unscrupulousness.

And yet, a man who certainly was one of the most observant of his generation, Jules Ferry, who was not destined to see all the episodes which have rendered the Dreyfus affair so memorable, meeting Esterhazy one evening, expressed to me, as we were going out together from the hospitable house where we had dined, the profound distrust with which the brilliant

officer inspired him. "C'est un homme capable de tout," he told me, and when I asked him what reasons he had for proffering such a severe judgment on a man he did not know except superficially—"Look at his hands," he said, "ce sont les mains d'un brigand." Later, when I saw Esterhazy during the Zola trial, I remembered these words, and glanced at the hands of the Colonel as he was giving evidence at the bar; they were repulsive in their shape, and certainly gave one the impression of being the hands of a brigand.

Esterhazy was the saddest of all the sad heroes of the Dreyfus affair, because the other sad actor in the drama, Colonel Henry, had at least the courage to seek in death the expiation of his crime. There has been much talk about his suicide, and some people have expressed a doubt concerning it, suggesting that it had been simulated, and that the Colonel had simply been put out of the way, as he might have become rather an embarrassing witness. I hasten to say that I do not believe in this version. Colonel Henry was a soldier, more imbued with military discipline than Esterhazy; he would not have been able to face the shame of a public trial, and his soldier's soul would not have found the courage to accuse those who had had the right to order him to do the deed for which he was to lose his life, and his honour after death.

When I say so, it is on the authority of another soldier who also had had to do with the question of the guilt or innocence of Captain Dreyfus, General de Pellieux. It was he who had read during the debates of the Zola trial, when the great writer had been sent before a jury to answer to the accusation of having published his famous letter, "I accuse," the false document manufactured by Henry. It is impossible to deny that the General had done so in the full conviction that it was decisive and would make the whole world share his own persuasion as to the guilt of Dreyfus. When,

later on, M. Cavaignac, who presided at the War Office, had the loyalty to declare publicly that this document was nothing but a forgery, made for the purpose of preventing the revision of the trial of the unfortunate prisoner on Devil's Island, General de Pellieux was inconsolable. His grief was that anyone could believe he had wanted to crush Dreyfus with the weight of an accusation which he had known to be false, and it was whilst discussing with me later on all the details of this unfortunate episode in his life that he told me his opinion about Colonel Henry, adding that he had not the slightest doubt as to the suicide of the unfortunate officer.

Another rather strange feature of the Dreyfus affair was the advantages which it procured to all the enemies of the Clerical party. Unfortunately for the Catholics and Legitimists in France, they took up the most intransigent attitude in the question. They identified it with the Catholic Church, and with its interests, and they thought to find in it the pretext for a crusade against the Jews and the Republicans, declaring publicly that it was only under a Radical government, protecting the Israelites, that such an event as the so-called treason of Captain Dreyfus could have taken place. And among all the enemies of Dreyfus, none was more ardent than Père du Lac, the famous Jesuit, in whom the Republicans found their greatest and one of their most powerful adversaries. Another thing which must never be lost sight of when talking about the Dreyfus affair is that no one among all his defenders ever gave a thought to Dreyfus himself. The feelings and sufferings of the unfortunate man were always talked of, but those who continually harped upon them would have been extremely sorry had the government decided to treat him well, or to forgive him for his supposed crime. And one cannot understand how among all the ministers who were in power in France during the years which he spent in

disgrace, not one tried to put an end to the agitation by inaugurating the re-trial which was to prove his innocence.

I make no excuse for again calling attention to this fact, for I perceive that I am doing exactly the same thing myself; that, by talking about the Dreyfus affair, I forget entirely its hero, who deserves certainly more than a passing mention. I learned to know the Captain well after his return to France, and I learned, also, to respect and esteem him. Any man in his place would have harboured feelings of the most bitter resentment against those to whom he had owed such terrible sufferings. Dreyfus never once allowed an expression of anger to escape his lips. He did not care to talk about the years of his trial, but when he was forced to do so it was always in most measured terms, and without the slightest shade of a revengeful spirit. He once told me that, as a soldier, he could understand the feelings of those other soldiers who had believed him capable of betraying his country, but he thought that had he been in the place of his accusers, he would have taken greater care to verify the accusation against a brother in arms than had been done in his case. But whilst eager to see justice done to himself, he never approved of the means that some people used in order to bring this about. Dreyfus aspired only to one thing, and that was to be left in peace. He accepted the rehabilitation which was granted to him, but in his innermost heart he regretted rather than otherwise that he had to occupy once more the attention of the world. Captain Dreyfus was always modest and retiring in his disposition and character; it was just as painful to him to be praised as to be blamed.

To tell the truth, he returned from his exile a man of broken physique with shattered nerve, and had he been able to do what he liked, he would have retired somewhere in the country, far from the madding crowd, which had in turns hissed and

applauded him. He felt deeply grateful to all those who had worked for his release, but it was painful to him to have to see them, to mingle once more among the world whose injustice he had never forgotten.

Captain Dreyfus had an admirable wife, whose devotion has not been sufficiently appreciated by the public. She behaved heroically towards him, the more so that she was not very happy with him before the catastrophe that separated them for a while.

Just before the Captain was arrested, his wife had applied for a divorce from him; but when she heard him accused, she immediately put an end to the proceedings and devoted herself entirely to the task of his rehabilitation, sparing neither her health, nor her efforts, nor her money in order to obtain it.

When he arrived at Rennes, she had only one thought, and that was to throw herself into his arms. Now the couple live a most happy life, but though Madame Dreyfus has entirely forgotten that in regard to her husband she performed more than her duty, he always remembers it, and nothing could be more touching than to witness the reverence with which he approaches her, or speaks about her. For once the absolute devotion and sacrifice of a noble woman met with gratitude, and was not in vain.

In general all the family of Captain Dreyfus has stood by him, with a loyalty beyond praise. Mathieu Dreyfus, his brother, did not allow the slightest opportunity to escape by which he could defend the accused man. He worked at it with a patience and an energy worthy of the highest commendation, and never allowed himself to be discouraged in his efforts. It was he, also, who uttered the best definition of his brother's case. When asked once whether he did not feel happy in the knowledge that such a powerful party (to

which belonged the most distinguished men in France) had taken up the cause of Captain Dreyfus, he replied that, of course, he could not but feel flattered by it, but that perhaps his brother would have obtained the justice which was due to him sooner, if it had not been to the interest of so many people to drag his case out as long as possible, in order to reap personal advantages from it which they would never have obtained without the opportunity which he had given to them, at the cost of so much suffering and so much unnecessarily borne shame.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### Parisian Salons under the Third Republic

Madame de Caillavet's salon was certainly one of the most influential among political and literary men of the Third Republic. She was one of the leading women of that period, was moreover an excellent hostess, and, thanks to the continual presence of Anatole France in her house, she succeeded in attracting many notables to her salon. Journalists composed the majority of her visitors, and diplomats occasionally came to hear the last news of the day, especially whilst the Dreyfus agitation lasted. Dramatists were always to be found at her receptions, colleagues of her son Gaston de Caillavet, the author of so many amusing comedies, whose collaborator, the Marquis de Flers, the husband of Sardou's daughter, was also among the number of people who seldom missed these friendly gatherings. But in spite of this, and notwithstanding the number of clever men and pretty and amiable women who clustered around her, to the eyes of a keen observer there was always something Bohemian about her receptions. It was not the salon of a *grande dame*, and it was no longer that of a bourgeoise of olden times: it was essentially modern, like the Republic itself.

Far different from it was the house of Madame Ménard Dorian, also one of the feminine stars of the Republic. Madame Dorian was a charming woman, who had received an excellent education, and who, coming as she did from an old bourgeois stock, never pretended to be aught else than what

she was by birth. She was extremely intelligent, very broad in her opinions, and with many advanced ideas in regard to religion and politics; above everything else, she was a lady in her manners, her general behaviour, and her tastes. Very rich, she possessed a lovely house in the Rue de la Faisanderie, which she had furnished with extreme taste and where she used to give receptions as sumptuous as they were pleasant.

There one could meet, together with some of those who frequented the salon of Madame de Caillavet and other Republican hostesses of the same kind, persons belonging to other classes, and forming part of the aristocratic circle of Paris. Academicians frequented it, and diplomatists were generally eager to be introduced to Madame Ménard Dorian, where they ran no risk of meeting people they would not have cared to become acquainted with, and where they could, on the other hand, get an idea as to what was going on in Republican circles. Madame Dorian had been a Dreyfusard, but she had been so moderately and in a ladylike way. Her salon was something like the one of Madame Geoffrin in the eighteenth century, with the exception that no one would have dared to say about it what the Marquise du Deffand had told of the former, that it was "une omelette au lard." One gossiped in it, in a mild way, and became interested in the literary movement of the day, perhaps even more than in the political one.

M. Ménard Dorian used to put in an appearance at his wife's receptions now and then, when he was not too busy to do so. He was a quiet, pleasant little man, liked by everybody, and especially by ladies, who always found him most polite and amiable to them. An evening party or dinner given in the Hotel de la Rue de la Faisanderie was always sure to be a meeting place for intelligent and clever people, and no one who had once been asked ever regretted it, but

on the contrary was always most eager for the invitation to be repeated.

M. Ménard Dorian is now dead, and his widow only sees her friends occasionally, and in a quiet fashion, having refrained from opening again the hospitable doors of her house so freely as in former years. But she has remained the same amiable woman she always was, and certainly among the Republican ladies of the present day she deserves to rank first. She would have graced the Court of any European monarch.

Madame Dorian had one daughter who had been married to Georges Hugo, the grandson of Victor Hugo. That marriage ended in a catastrophe and a divorce, after which the young Hugo married the first cousin of Mademoiselle Dorian, who had attracted his fancy one morning when he had met her at his mother-in-law's, together with her husband, the sculptor Ajalbert.

The daughter of the charming Madame Dorian had a curious personality; she seemed to take a vicious pleasure in thwarting her parents, and making herself disagreeable to them whenever she found the opportunity. She occupied a flat in their house, the Hotel de la Rue de la Faisanderie, and on the evenings when her father and mother gave receptions at which the partisans of Captain Dreyfus, such as Colonel, later on General, Picquart, the Zolas, and their circle of friends were honoured guests, Madame Hugo used to invite people such as Drumont and the strongest anti-Semites of Paris, so that several times queer situations arose, and the staunchest Dreyfusards entered by mistake the apartment of one of their worst enemies, whilst one evening Henri Rochefort himself, who for the world would not be seen at Madame Ménard Dorian's, was ushered into her drawing-room by a footman who did not know him by sight.

That sort of thing, however, could not go on for any length of time, and when Pauline Hugo left the house of her parents, her departure was a relief to them. But even after her marriage to Herman Paul, after her divorce and Paul's, she did not become reconciled to her father and mother.

Georges Hugo's sister, Jeanne, was also a strange kind of person. She married when quite young, Leon Daudet, the son of Alphonse Daudet, and very soon ran away from him with the explorer Charcot. It was said that Daudet was delighted when he divorced her, as they had scarcely been a single day without quarrelling since they married, and, although a fervent Catholic, he hastened to take to himself another wife.

The mother of Leon Daudet, Madame Alphonse Daudet, is also a celebrity in her way, and gives receptions at which the best society of Paris can be met. She has entirely renounced her bourgeois origin, and only talks of Dukes and Duchesses. She labels herself a Clerical by conviction and a Royalist by sympathy, and frequents the houses of great ladies, such as the Duchesse de Rohan or the Comtesse Mathieu de Noailles. Her second son, Lucien Daudet is a devoted admirer of the Empress Eugénie. Among Republican hostesses I haven't yet mentioned Madame Psichari, the daughter of Ernest Renan. She has inherited the intelligence and the art of conversation of her father, and is one of the most distinguished women of modern France. At her house can be met most of the members of the French Academy, and nearly all the prominent literary men in Paris. Her receptions are perhaps a shade dull, and more or less solemn, but always instructive and always interesting. Her personality was always singularly attractive, and inspired great respect, because her errors of judgment when they occurred were always sincere.

Madame Psichari was one of the victims of the divorce mania that has lately taken hold of Parisian society, and, to the great astonishment of her numerous friends, after more than thirty years' matrimony she applied for a decree. She had one son, who occupied for a few days the attention of Paris, when at twenty years old he married the daughter of Anatole France, nearly seventeen years his senior, to the chagrin of both their families.

Madame Zola, also, used to receive her friends on Saturdays in her little flat in the Rue de Rome. At her house could be met all the principal actors in the Dreyfus drama, including its hero. I must here mention one fact that is very little known, that Zola, far from making money out of the Dreyfus affair, as it was said everywhere that he had done, lost a great deal by his attitude in regard to it. His novels, instead of being read more than had been the case formerly, were on the contrary boycotted, and several important papers for which he wrote articles, and which published his works before they came out in volume form, closed their doors to him after the letter " J'accuse," for which he was sent before a jury at first and to exile afterwards.

Emile Zola died, relatively, a poor man, and his widow found herself reduced to almost embarrassed circumstances after his death. She sold a great deal of the furniture which he had collected, gave up to the State in return for a modest remuneration the villa of Médan, where he had lived for so many years, and arranged her existence on quite a different scale from that which had been her custom before her widowhood. Zola, as well as Captain Dreyfus himself, were the only two people who did not profit by the clamour which arose around them and around their actions.

Talking about Dreyfus reminds me of an incident in his story which, so far, I believe, has never been told. When

he was languishing on the barren rock called the Devil's Island, a Russian who had had occasion to approach the Tsar spoke to Mathieu Dreyfus, the Captain's brother, and advised him to appeal to the Russian Sovereign to intercede in favour of the Captain. Mathieu Dreyfus said that he would consult his sister-in-law, and reply in a few days. When these days had elapsed, he came back and told the man who had made the proposition that neither Madame Dreyfus, nor himself, thought that they had the moral right to apply to a foreign Monarch, or to ask his intervention in a case that was too important for France not to allow her to dispose of it herself. In general the dignity displayed by the whole Dreyfus family cannot sufficiently be praised; they all unanimously showed themselves superior to the misfortunes which assailed them.

So far all the hostesses of whom I have spoken were long past middle age, but there was another lady, young and beautiful, with a shade of eccentricity in her manners, who also aspired to have a salon, and to be able to dictate to those who visited it, or at least to suggest to them the opinions they ought to have. It was the Comtesse Mathieu de Noailles, a Roumanian by birth, coming from the family of the Princes of Brancovan, whose mother had been very well known in London, where her father, Musurus Pasha, had occupied for long the post of Turkish Ambassador. The Princesse de Brancovan was one of the best musicians of her generation, and her wonderful talent for the piano was famous among her acquaintances. She had been handsome, and her daughters had inherited her loveliness as well as her intellectual gifts. The eldest one, whose large dowry secured her an entrance into the ancient aristocratic family of the Ducs de Noailles, has made for herself a name among the poets of modern France Her books have been widely read, and have had a great success, which they deserved, because there was some really genuine

poetic inspiration in them. Madame de Noailles has succumbed to the vogue of eccentricity; she wears long floating white garments which trail out behind and give her the appearance of a fairy from the children's tales. She speaks languidly, as if sick of a world she would really be very sorry to leave, and looks disdainfully at humanity in general.

The Comtesse de Noailles used to give parties, during which she recited some of her own poetry, and allowed her great friend and admirer, the Comte Robert de Montesquieu, to read his. She did not trouble much about her guests, merely smiled on them when they arrived, and softly sighed when she saw them going away. She glided about her lovely rooms, as the ghost of something too beautiful to be real, and she seemed to be interested in nothing that did not concern her personally, or that had no association with her books or poems.

Her receptions were singularly eclectic. Apart from the family, friends and relations of the Noailles, one met people who belonged to an entirely different grade—journalists, artists, politicians, even those of an advanced shade; members of the Republican government, and diplomats or foreigners happening to be in Paris. She received them all with the utmost grace, and liked to see them surround her, like the satellites of her fame and of her high social position. In its way her vanity was as remarkable as it was charming.

Madame de Noailles composed poems, the Comtesse de Greffuhle wrote operas and sonatas with decided talent. Madame de Greffuhle has played, and is playing still, a very important part in Parisian society. She was by birth a Princess de Chimay, and had married, without dower, the Count Greffuhle, whose fortune was supposed to be one of the largest in France, and had at once begun to exercise a considerable influence in the circles in which she moved. She was beautiful,

intelligent, had great tact, and a considerable knowledge of the world, liked to surround herself with artists and musicians, to organise exhibitions of works of art, and to help her neighbour as much as she could.

Her salon was not the meeting-place of the pure Faubourg St. Germain, neither was it, on the other hand, exclusively Republican. But it afforded a neutral ground to men belonging to both parties, and her receptions were never dull nor banal, but on the contrary always interesting and pleasant. She possessed a lovely country place near Paris, called Bois Boudran, where she entertained most sumptuously, and where she often welcomed foreign Sovereigns or members of Royal houses, when they happened to come to France. Madame de Greffuhle was a woman essentially made for society, who could never have lived outside it. She described herself better than anyone else could have done one day when she was asked to write her name on the visitors' book of the Phare d'Ailly, near Dieppe, where some friends had taken her. She signed " Chimay Greffuhle, dame de qualité," thus admitting that she had no pretensions to be considered a *grande dame.*

The Baron Henri de Rothschild was also "un écrivain amateur," with more pretensions to literary talent than perhaps that talent deserved. He had married Mlle. Weiswiller, who is supposed to be one of the best-dressed women in Paris, and whose name appears prominently in all the chronicles of the *Figaro* or the *Gaulois.* The couple entertain with the hospitality for which their family has always been famous, and the Baron has made for himself a name among the benefactors of the Paris poor, for whom he does a great deal. He has studied medicine and even practised it with all the zeal of a millionaire who believes himself to have a vocation for some kind of science.

Baron Henri is an exceedingly pleasant man, cultured,

and well read, capable of most entertaining conversation on a variety of topics. The receptions which he gives, and of which his wife helps him to do the honours with an exquisite grace, are the meeting-place of almost all the distinguished men of scientific and literary Paris. Members of the government can be met at them, but though his salon is known to be Liberal in its opinions, it is yet one at which politics have never played a part or been discussed. The guests succeeded in avoiding them even at the time of the Dreyfus affair, during which the Rothschilds adopted an entirely passive and impartial attitude.

Talking of politics makes me think of a house where they were always very prominent, and almost the only subject of conversation. It was the house of M. Rouvier, one of the ablest politicians whom France has seen in recent times, who had occupied, more than once, important State positions, and who was always spoken of, among his friends, as a possible President of the Republic. M. Rouvier's was a most complicated mind. He had considerable capacity, an intelligence far above the average, great ambition, and absolutely no vanity, perhaps because he had a full consciousness of his strength and of his worth, in presence of the lesser intelligences with which he was surrounded.

He had made his way with the help of a good deal of luck, and perhaps more determination than is generally met with. There was one moment in his life when he nearly became one of the victims of the Panama scandal, but he succeeded in emerging quite unharmed. As a financier, he very nearly approached genius, and when he left office almost all the large banks in France entreated him to join their board. He became director of a large financial establishment, which he managed with the intelligence and knowledge that he brought into everything which he attempted.

But although he had many partisans and more friends than could have been expected in a man who had held the difficult posts which he had successfully occupied; though he was in a certain sense a sort of small king, feared by most of the politicians who ruled France or aspired to do so, he always regretted that he had been obliged to retire from the government of his country. When he died, he was about to put forward his candidature to the Presidency of the Republic, in opposition to that of M. Poincaré or any other of the probable successors of M. Fallières at the end of the latter's septenary.

M. Rouvier had been twice married. His first wife was the famous sculptor known as Claude Vignon, whose first husband was l'Abbé Constant, an unfrocked priest, who was later on to be so well known by the name of Eliphas Lévy, and who was considered to be the greatest master in occult sciences that the world possessed. I met Eliphas Lévy more than once, and I was always extremely interested in him. He had a most venerable appearance, with his long white beard, and of all the indulgent men I have ever met he was the one who practised that virtue to the largest extent. He lived absorbed in his studies of high magic, but would always carefully avoid talking on the subject, save with his most intimate friends. He was called uncanny, I don't know why, because he certainly had the most peaceful countenance possible, but a certain prejudice used to cling to him or rather existed against him at the time I knew him; probably because the fact of a priest having given up his profession appeared still to be something quite dreadful in France.

Madame Constant, or Claude Vignon as she was generally called, had greatly contributed to the unfrocking of her husband, but though he had loved her passionately, she had very soon tired of him, and the couple separated, never

to meet again so long as they lived. She married Rouvier, to whom she brought the very large fortune she possessed, but died not long after, leaving one son, with whom his father never could get along, and whom one never met at his house.

The second Madame Rouvier was a small, slight woman, with golden curls, a most pleasant manner, and a charming conversationalist. She aided her husband quite admirably, interested herself in his political career and successes, and was perhaps even more ambitious than he. The couple lived in a splendid establishment which they possessed at Neuilly, on the outskirts of the Bois de Boulogne, where they often entertained, and where generally the latest news of the day was to be heard. No political man would have dared to ignore M. Rouvier and his wife, and their salon has been more than once called the " succursale du Sénat," of which he was a member. Diplomats also were to be met in their house; and it was, indeed, frequented by almost everybody of note in Paris.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### The Present Tone of Paris Society

I have seen many changes take place in Paris during the twenty-five years of my sojourn in the gay city. I cannot say that all these changes have been congenial; the good manners for which Frenchmen were famous, certainly disappeared simultaneously with the crinoline. A *laisser aller* has replaced the stiffness which at one time made the select Parisian houses so difficult of access to the foreigner. At present the American and Jewish elements have entirely invaded French society, and imported into it not only their easy ways but also an independence of speech and action which would have horrified dowagers of olden times. Sport also, which was formerly unknown, has absorbed the thoughts of people who would not have dreamed of it a few years ago. Life in hotels has done away with the intimacy of the home, and whereas formerly one only invited to dine at a restaurant people one would not have cared to entertain in one's own house, now it is the reverse, and those whom it is desired to honour are asked to lunch or to supper at the Ritz or the Meurice, or some other fashionable place of the same kind. The refinement that was so essentially a French characteristic has entirely disappeared. Women have grown loud, and men have become coarse, girls have lost their modesty, and boys are impertinent. An altogether new world has superseded that of the Second Empire.

The advent of American millionaires has aroused the

desire to be able to emulate their luxury, and the introduction of Jews into the best French society, in spite of all the efforts of Drumont and other anti-Semites, has done away with the prejudice which existed against them. Indeed, Jewish heiresses are sought as wives by bearers of some of the oldest and most aristocratic names in France; Mlle. Ephrussi has become Princess de Lucinge; the Marquise de la Ferté Meun was Mlle. Porgès; the Princess Murat, the wife of the head of that house, is the granddaughter of old Madame Heine, herself the only child of the banker Furtado; and the present Princesse de Monaco, whose first husband was the Duc de Richelieu, is the daughter of another Heine, also a banker, whose many millions she inherited.

These new elements entering society have necessarily transformed it. Paris is now a vast hotel where are met all kinds of people, and no one feels the necessity to observe etiquette or restraint. It is a place where the man who pays can obtain everything he wants. Excepting in a few houses, as of old was that of Madame Aimery de la Rochefoucauld, one can meet everywhere the representatives of Hebrew banking houses, or great tradesmen, whom Parisian hostesses are but too eager to invite to their balls or receptions, feeling sure that it will bring them some profit in one shape or another. Money is the only thing that counts nowadays. It is so everywhere unfortunately, but in France it seems to be more potent than anywhere else.

In consequence, society is perhaps smarter than it has ever been, but it is a great question whether it is so distinguished, and it is certain that it is no longer so good-mannered.

If one examines things carefully, one cannot wonder at it. When the first heiresses to great fortunes, but to nothing else, were admitted into the Faubourg St. Germain dowagers looked at them askance, and even their husbands seemed

half ashamed to have been obliged to marry them. It was but natural that, repulsed as it were by the people who ought to have opened their arms to them, they should have turned towards those who belonged to their own sphere. The *nouveaux* were invited to their parties, at which the old aristocratic representatives of monarchical France were at first rather shy about putting in an appearance. But very soon the *noblesse* began to feel at home, and there met other heiresses whom in their turn they were to take to their bosoms.

The leading hostesses in Paris at that time were the Duchesse de Grammont, née Rothschild; the Duchesse de Doudeauville, whose grandmother was Madame Blanc of Monaco fame; the Comtesse Bernard de Gontaut Biron, whose father, M. Cabibel, had not been one of Lyons' best citizens, though he had lived in that town all his life and made all his money there; the Comtesse de Trédern, who had been Mademoiselle Say, and so on.

Money did away with all the differences which formerly existed between the various classes of society, and newspapers which began to make or to mar social reputations mentioned, as the most fashionable women in fashionable Paris, Madame Schneider of Creusot fame, Madame Pierre Lebaudy, Madame Deutsch de la Meurthe, and the wives and daughters of every banker or industrial whose millions had opened the doors of the social Eden into which a hundred years ago no one who was not an aristocrat could ever have hoped to enter. Society became a haunt of millionaires, even Monsieur Chauchard, the owner of the Grands Magasins du Louvre, would have been admitted into it easily had he only lived long enough.

Automobilism, which gave to so many representatives of the oldest names in France the opportunity to make money by fostering its popularity, and lending the support of their family connections to the numerous shareholders' companies

which sprang into existence at a minute's notice, contributed considerably also to what I would call the demoralisation of good manners. Many people, in order to make money through this new kind of sport, associated with persons of a very low social and moral standard, or even simple mechanicians were admitted at first to the Automobile Club, and at last into the drawing-rooms of its members. Much had to be forgiven these parvenus of sport, many errors of etiquette overlooked, but very soon all were forgetting themselves, and instead of raising these people to its own level, society came down to theirs. Ladies, who could more easily dispose of the tickets of the many charitable lotteries, or theatre performances, which they patronised among these *nouveaux venus* than in their own circle of acquaintances, and who, in case of necessity, could also apply to them for a small loan or the settlement of an angry dress-maker's bill, were but too glad to invite them to their receptions. So, little by little, the salons of the noble ladies of the Faubourg St. Germain became a kind of succursale of the "haute banque and haute finance" not only of Paris, but also of France and of New York.

There were some exceptions to this rule, but these were not frequent. I must mention as one of these exceptions the Comtesse Jean de Montebello, one of the loveliest, most charming, and most intelligent women that Paris could boast. She was the daughter-in-law of that amiable Comtesse Gustave de Montebello, who had been one of the favourite ladies in waiting of the Empress Eugénie. She lived in the private hotel, which the former had built for herself in the Rue Barbet de Jouiy, preserving all the old traditions that were associated with it, and maintaining the grave, serious tone for which it had been famous during the Second Empire.

Madame Jean de Montebello is a true type of the great lady; her affable manners, the perfect distinction which she

shows in conversation, the inimitable grace and ease that accompanies every one of her movements, makes her a delightful creature. Beautiful as a dream in her youth, in her old age she has kept the straight, classic features, the soft eyes, and the kind, joyous expression for which she has always been famous. Her wit is bright, without the least shade of ill-nature, and she is one of the very few Frenchwomen of the higher classes whose conversation and culture constitute an attraction strong enough to make one forget even her beauty and her other charms. She is learned without being a pedant, and no one meeting her for the first time would guess that under her pleasant way of greeting you is hidden a knowledge and a love of art and literature such as unfortunately is but seldom found among the many fair women who throng the drawing-rooms of brilliant Paris.

Madame Jean de Montebello had a cousin, the Marquise de Montebello, whose husband occupied for something like ten years the post of French Ambassador in St. Petersburg, and who was the subject of many discussions in the world in which she had literally been thrust, but to which she did not belong either by birth or by education. The Marquise de Montebello was the granddaughter of Madame Chevreux Aubertot, the proprietress of the big shop, called the Gagne-Petit, in the Avenue de l'Opéra, in Paris. She was a bright, intelligent, dashing, intriguing woman, full of ambition, and of desire to play a part in European politics. Amusing, and utterly regardless of what people might say or think about her, she was enormously rich, and knew how to spend her money.

When she arrived in St. Petersburg she threw wide open the doors of the Embassy, and entertained all who expressed the desire to enjoy her hospitality. She soon made friends with the Grand Dukes, the brothers of Alexander III., who

always gave their affections and their preferences to the people who amused them, and, indeed, it was impossible not to be amused in the company of Madame de Montebello. She was essentially a person who liked to see the utmost liberty both of language and of manners reign around her, and who did not hesitate to put her feet on the table, or do anything *outré*, provided she could in that way attract to her house the company she sought. Under her rule the French Embassy became a sort of Liberty Hall, where one could do anything one liked. She gave to her friends and acquaintances the run of her house, of her kitchen and of her cellar, and she would have given them the run of her bedroom had they only dared to ask for it.

When she left Russia she was extremely regretted there, even by those who did not care for her, because with her disappeared a bright element that always brought along with it some gaiety, even in the dullest circles. Whilst she was Ambassadress, the French alliance was extremely popular, it became less so after she was gone.

The Marquis de Montebello was a diplomat of the old school, pompous, solemn, not esteemed clever, but with a ripened experience. He had traditions, knowledge of the world, and understood perfectly well that his enormous wealth would help his country to win for herself the friendship of Russia. He fulfilled all his duties with tact, and his manners were essentially those of a gentleman — quiet, reserved, and with a shade of self-sufficiency which became him. He made himself just as popular as his brilliant wife, and cared immensely for his position as an Ambassador. It broke his heart when he had to abandon it; he never could get reconciled to the fact, the more so that he was not the favourite in Paris he had been in St. Petersburg, and though the Marquise tried to give receptions and dinners to all those who cared to come

to them, she did not succeed in making either herself or her husband popular in Paris society, though they contrived to be admitted in several select houses, such as the one of the Comtesse Mélanie de Pourtalès.

Madame de Montebello had a great friend who tried hard to launch her into the society of the Faubourg St. Germain. It was the Comte Joseph de Gontaut Biron, the son of the former French Ambassador in Berlin, the Vicomte de Gontaut Biron, and one of the most popular men in the whole of Paris, who usually did the honours of the city when Russian Grand Dukes visited it. The Comte de Gontaut was the only handsome member of a very ugly family which had redeemed its want of beauty by unusual cleverness. He had been married to a Princesse de Polignac, whose heart he had very soon broken, and whose fortune he had quite as soon squandered. The Gontauts occupied a privileged position in the Faubourg St. Germain, thanks to their numerous alliances and to their many relatives. The elder members of the family, such as the Comtesse Armand, or the Princesse de Beauvau, tried to maintain the traditions of their race, and could be classified among the *hautes et puissantes dames* of their generation, but the younger members had mixed freely with the other elements of Paris society, and had assimilated their characteristics as well as those of their own circle.

I have spoken of the Comte Boni de Castellane, the former husband of Miss Anna Gould. His father, the Marquis de Castellane, had at one time played a part in French politics, when he had been a member of the first Assemblée Nationale, which had elected M. Thiers as President of the Republic, or rather the Executive power as it was called at that time. Unpleasant incidents of a private nature had obliged him to leave public life, and also to retire from several clubs of which he had been a member. But he had contrived to keep afloat

in the Faubourg, and was rather feared there on account of the sharpness of his tongue and the ill-nature with which he repeated all the gossip which he spent his time in collecting. He was extremely intelligent, and had none of the foppery which made his son so thoroughly disagreeable; he would certainly have been a man who could have made his way in the world had he only tried to conform to the tenets of society.

His second son married the widow of Prince Furstenberg, who was a cousin of his, being the daughter of the old Duc de Sagan and of his second wife, Mademoiselle Pauline de Castellane, and considerably older than himself. The Comtesse Jean de Castellane is at the present moment one of the leading hostesses in Paris. She is clever, with excellent manners, with tendencies to pose as a woman of culture, and not disdaining to write now and then little articles in the daily papers, which are always accepted with pleasure on account of the signature which accompanies them. She could never be taken for anything else but a lady, but I doubt whether one would at once call her a *grande dame* in the sense in which this word was understood formerly.

I think I have mentioned the name of the Comtesse de Trédern. That lady certainly deserves more than a passing mention. She was a Mlle. Say, the sister of the Princesse Amedée de Broglie, and she had married when quite young the Marquis de Brissac, the eldest son of the Duc de Brissac, who was killed during the Franco-German War. Left a widow with two children, she began first to restore the castle of Brissac in Anjou, which is considered one of the finest private residences in France, and which she bought from her father-in-law. Then she married the Comte de Trédern, from whom she parted after a few years of troublous union. Since then she has queened it at Brissac, or in her beautiful house of the

Place Vendôme, where she regularly gives sumptuous entertainments.

Among other hostesses I must say a word concerning the Duchesse de Gramont, a Jewess and the daughter of Baron Amschel de Rothschild of Frankfurt. She was one of the few really *grandes dames* of Paris. Clever, full of tact, and kind and good, as few women have been kind and good, she was essentially a great lady, and made for herself friends wherever she went. Her husband is now married to an Italian Princess, whom he took to his heart a few months after the death of the Duchesse Marguerite, but the latter is not forgotten by the world which she graced and adorned, and where her early death caused more sincere sorrow than is generally expressed in the circle to which she belonged.

Madame de Gramont had a sister who became the Princesse de Wagram, and who was also a favourite in Parisian society, where she won for herself a great position. Unfortunately she also died young, and with her disappeared one of the last great ladies in France.

Foreigners form an important contingent in Paris society. The gay town has always attracted wandering souls eager to find in strange places what they cannot get at home, and who have succumbed so well to its charms that they lack the courage to leave it. A numerous company of Americans and Russians met in society live in the new district about the Arc de Triomphe, and they visit all the houses where entertainments are going on. Polish emigrants and Polish aristocracy have found their headquarters in the Ile St. Louis at the Hotel Lambert, where Prince Ladislas Tsartoryski, the husband of Princess Marguerite of Orleans, opened the doors of his magnificent residence to them with unbounded hospitality.

Several members of the Radziwill family also settled by the Seine, after the marriage of one of them with

the daughter of M. Blanc, the owner of the Monaco gambling house. He was the father of the present Duchesse de Doudeauville. The Counts Branicki and their connections bought themselves houses in the neighbourhood of the Rue de Penthièvre, where the chief of the race had settled. There hostility to the Russian Government was fanned by every possible device, and there hatred against Russia was preached with an energy worthy of a better cause.

The Russian colony was also an important one. It lacked, however, a rendezvous, and it had to submit to constant rebuffs on the part of its own Embassy and Consulate, where it is the fashion to repulse all the compatriots who call there unless they belong to the ultra-smart set which is in possession of influence in St. Petersburg official circles. Several Russian Grand Dukes, who had become constant inhabitants of the French capital, gave their colony an appearance of splendour which other foreign quarters lacked. Foremost among these scions of the Russian Imperial house was the Grand Duke Paul, who, after his marriage with the divorced wife of one of the officers of his own regiment, had left his fatherland and settled in Paris permanently. He goes about a great deal in society, where his wife, who has been created Countess of Hohenfelsen by the Prince Regent of Bavaria, is treated like a Grand Duchess, and in society given the precedence of one.

Life in smart Paris to-day is totally different from life as it was in the time of the Second Empire. Sport has entered into it, and is now one of its principal functions. Everyone who can, or who cannot, afford it possesses an automobile, and thinks himself obliged to make a show of it in the morning in the Bois de Boulogne, which is also invaded before lunch by a bevy of fair ladies who pretend they come there to do some walking, but who in reality want

only to show themselves and to see others. It is there that all the gossip, which later on in the afternoon is spread at many tables, finds its origin, and where reputations are marred and lost. It is there that "accidental" meetings take place either at polo or at some exhibition, or at one of the numerous tea-houses that have sprung up on all sides lately, where the Parisienne comes to eat cakes, and not to drink tea, with which she is not yet sufficiently familiar. From ten to twelve o'clock everybody worth knowing is to be met in the Bois, where it is fashionable to be seen at that hour, and where no one would care to go later or earlier.

The afternoon offers other kinds of pleasures, and fashionable society, after a pause at the aforementioned tea-houses, repairs either to the races or to some exhibition, or more often in summer time to the polo ground at Bagatelle, where it likes to watch the game. The players belong to the most elegant men about town, and think that the fact of taking part in polo confers on them the reputation of being real sportsmen. The evenings are spent either at a ball or at a reception, but late hours are not now the custom in Paris, and midnight generally sees the fashionable birds in their beds.

There is no serious interest in that kind of existence, no conversations worthy of being so called, except now and then by the greatest of chances. The witty, clever French society, the salons which had such a universal reputation in olden times, have all disappeared with the snows of the many winters that have elapsed since the days when they ruled public opinion, and when their influence was felt everywhere, often in politics and always in literature, which had to conform more or less to their rules, and which would not have cared to offend their good taste. Parisian society has degenerated, it is impossible to deny it, degenerated on account of

the many foreign elements that have invaded it, and also on account of the importance which money has acquired, an importance that has taken the place occupied formerly by intelligence, beauty, virtue—all the things which ought to be respected, but which we are apt, now, to forget when we find them associated with that money which is the only god whose supremacy is acknowledged in that Paris which thinks itself the capital of the world, but which is only the purveyor of most of its evil pleasures.

Not only in society as a whole is this laxity of demeanour and conduct discernible, but there is a perceptible loosening of the laws which used to govern legislators and officials. What men would formerly consider as impinging upon their honour is no longer looked at askance, and so things happen which leave an unpleasant memory. This has been observed in certain activities in the financial world.

In an earlier part of these reflections I have spoken of the Panama affair, and in the present chapter I have made some reference to the money-fever that pervades Paris to-day. It is therefore only necessary here to be very brief.

There was a great outcry and a wealth of righteous indignation at the Panama disclosures, but it is difficult to perceive any improvement. There have been scandals of recent date, the echoes of which reverberate even in 1914, and in which just as many people were implicated whose names and social position ought to have put them above sordid intrigues. Paris has always offered an excellent ground for financiers of doubtful moral standing. Every paper has advertisements offering to the innocent public every kind of facility to enable it to lose its money. With the help of a press willing to print anything provided it is paid for at a sufficiently high rate, shares not worth the paper they are printed upon are thrown upon the market, and are eagerly bought by credulous creatures

who believe blindly in what their papers tell them, and who look forward to large benefits out of the promised rise of the said shares. That rise never comes, and then sometimes an angry dupe inquires of the police, generally without success, as to the reason why no redress can be obtained. The man in the street holds and expresses emphatic opinions, which if people believed were true would mean that the corruption of Republican government surpasses everything of the kind that ever flourished at the time of the Second Empire, about the venality of which so much has been written and spoken.

Whatever may be said of present-day finance, it is enough to remind the reader of the gigantic frauds which Madame Humbert was able to perpetrate for so many years, of the ease with which Cornelius Herz and Arton were able to escape from the grip of the law, and of the facility which the famous Rochette, the hero of the last financial scandal that France can boast, found in avoiding being imprisoned or obliged to give up any portion of his ill-gotten gains. Rochette succeeded in avoiding every pursuit for a long time, though numerous complaints had been made against him. It was said that the complaints had always been left unexamined under the pretence that they proceeded from people who simply wanted blackmail. It is no secret that several deputies were great friends with that successful financier, during whose reign their stock exchange operations were always profitable.

Rochette is a curious example of the ease with which any man gifted with sufficient impudence can become an important personage. He began his career by being a waiter in a small hotel at Melun, soon tired of it, and went to Paris, where he obtained a situation as office assistant in one of those financial establishments which flourish for a few months and disappear together with their directors into the unknown

after a brief and brilliant existence. His experience there helped him considerably in his future life. He learned to avoid mistakes into which a novice in finance would be apt to fall. It is said that he profited by the whispered advice that "in order to be a lucky financier, one must before everything have a deputy in one's pocket."

When he became a banker and a director of several large concerns, he frequented the Chamber of Deputies, and even honoured with his attention the Senate. He affected great modesty, but took care to be kept well informed as to the private means of several important personages whose protection he thought might be of use to him in the future, and he managed in an unobtrusive way to make himself indispensable to them.

When the end came it was rumoured in Paris that most scandalous facts were about to come to light, and that the Panama affair would be eclipsed by them. Names were mentioned, at first secretly then quite loudly, until at last they found their way into the newspapers. But, somehow, the inquiry which had been begun dragged on until the public got tired of hearing nothing about it, and made up its mind not to think any more about the affair. In the meantime in prison Rochette was leading the best kind of life possible under the circumstances, had all the comforts which money allowed him to procure for himself, received visits from his numerous friends, and when at last he was released on bail pending his trial, he declared to all those who cared to hear it, that he would not only prove his innocence, but find people willing to trust him with their money again, in spite of his recent misadventures.

And when he was sentenced to several years' imprisonment, Rochette quietly took a railway ticket and disappeared into an unknown land, which probably is not very far from the

scene of his former exploits; sure that no one is going to discover him in the refuge which he had chosen, he is awaiting with the greatest confidence and calm the expiration of the time when proscription will allow him to reappear in Paris, and to begin again the financial career which he was obliged to interrupt for a short period.

How was it possible for Rochette to escape whilst Charles de Lesseps and his father were obliged to drink to the dregs the cup of their humiliation? The reply is very simple, perhaps obvious, and I hesitate to doubt the reader's perception by uttering it.

When the great Lesseps was accused of having tried to buy the support of some members of the Parliament, everyone cried out that it was a scandal which ought to be punished as severely as possible; but when it was proved that Rochette had succeeded in buying or winning over to his side some of the most influential political people in France, that he had even secured the indulgence of judges who ought to have been at least impartial, the public only shrugged its shoulders, and some persons were even found to say that after all he had been *un homme très fort*, and that it was better to be his friend than his enemy. When Rochette was arrested, excuses without number were found for him, and he was represented to be the victim of private vengeances and private blackmail. Times are changed indeed, and not only the opinions of men, but also their ideas as to right and wrong.

## CHAPTER XXX

### M. Fallières as President

The septenary of M. Loubet had come to an end. No one had ever given a thought to the possibility of his presenting himself for re-election, and he himself was but too glad to relinquish the burden of office. M. Loubet, in spite of all that has been said about him, was not the insignificant personage some had tried to represent him. He had been elected through the influence of the Radical party, but he had nevertheless the strength of character to resist the desires or even the orders of that same party on several occasions when he thought they wanted to go too far.

Popular opinion has it that this was sufficient to arouse the ire of M. Clemenceau, who, faithful to his tactics of holding in hand the leading strings of the government, furious to see his intentions frustrated, declared war against M. Loubet.

The latter was clever enough to appear to ignore it, and arranged matters so as to retire from the Presidency with all the honours of war, leaving to his successor the task of coping with the difficulties which the Radical party seemed determined to put in the way of every President of the Republic.

His successor, M. Fallières, was elected largely through the influence of M. Clemenceau. M. Fallières was essentially a peaceful man. He had accepted the position of President of the Republic, partly because he did not like to disobey the orders of his superiors, and partly because he was a careful

man, an excellent father, and saw in his septenary the opportunity to improve the material prospects of his children.

It was during his tenure of office that the Dreyfus affair came to a close, and that the Captain was not only rehabilitated but also rewarded for his sufferings with the Legion of Honour, in spite of the outcries which this decision raised among the Clericals and the anti-Semites. It was also he who signed the decree granting burial in the Panthéon to the ashes of Zola, and it was during his septenary, moreover, that relations were definitely broken with the Vatican. The last event produced a great sensation, especially when the representative of the Papal Nuncio, Mgr. Montagnini, was expelled from Paris by the police in about as brutal a way as it was possible to conceive.

Much has been written concerning that last measure, of which, let it be said *en passant*, neither M. Fallières nor the French Government had any reason to be proud. It was one of those acts of violence which only tend to exasperate the public mind against those who render themselves guilty of the indiscretion, but which is of no importance in reality. Of course Mgr. Montagnini had not behaved with the necessary tact in the delicate position wherein he found himself placed, but if he had had to do with gentlemen they would have asked him to go away of his own accord, which he would probably have been but too glad to do, and they would not have expelled him *mania militari*. M. Fallières, in spite of his middle-class education, felt this, and it is said that he vainly tried to avoid this scandal. The Radical party, however, had laid down its conditions not only to him, but also to M. Clemenceau, and the latter with all his cleverness and his energy was not strong enough to refuse it this satisfaction, which was craved with persistence and in such imperative terms.

I knew Mgr. Montagnini very well, and I happened to

call on him on the eve of the day which saw him thrown out of France with such unnecessary brutality. He had been warned of the measures about to be taken against him, but would not believe in its possibility. When I asked him why he had not telegraphed to Mgr. Merry del Val, then Secretary of State of the Holy See, asking permission to leave of his own accord, he replied to me that it would have been useless, because that permission would never have been granted to him. As I expressed my astonishment he explained to me at length that Rome wanted the French Government to resort to violence against its representative because it would only raise the prestige of the Church and provoke general indignation against its persecutors.

"All this will pass," he added; "many months will not go by before the very government which does not hesitate to insult a priest and the official representative of the Pope will find itself obliged to renew relations with the Holy See. So many questions will arise in connection with this separation of the Church and State, of which the French Radicals are so proud, that they will very soon see the mistake they have made."

Though Mgr. Montagnini was not a prophet by any means, he proved in this particular case to be right, because in spite of the open rupture of the French Republic with the Vatican, relations were never entirely interrupted between Rome and Paris. Indeed it would have been impossible, because in spite of the hatred for the Catholic Church which the leading politicians in France affected, they had on different occasions to turn to the representatives of the clergy for help, and they did not disdain even to ask them to use their influence whenever they wanted a candidate to be elected either in the Senate or in the Chamber of Deputies, who under the mask of being a moderate Liberal, was in reality a Radical of the

*Photo: Nadarz, Paris.*

M. A. FALLIÈRES

(President 1906–1913)

*Photo: Braun, Paris.*

M. R. POINCARÉ

(President 1913)

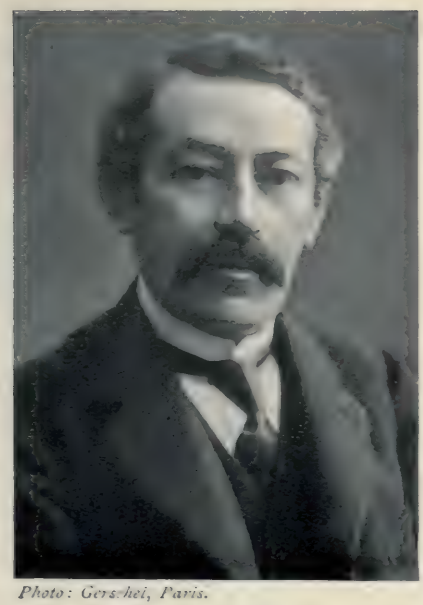

*Photo: Gerschel, Paris.*

M. A. BRIAND

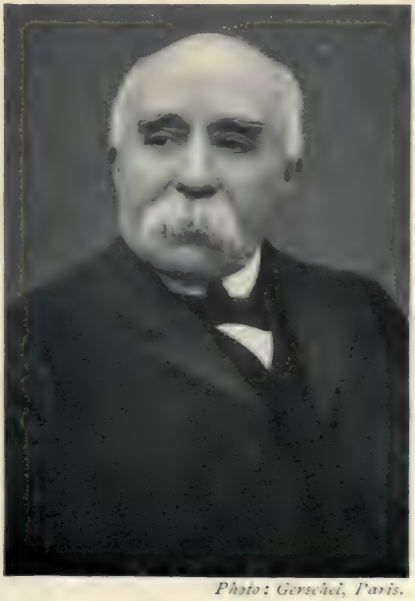

*Photo: Gerschel, Paris.*

M. G. CLEMENCEAU

purest water, and a fervent partisan of M. Clemenceau and his group.

It was at that time that the star of M. Clemenceau began to ascend higher in the heavens than it had ever been. Until the election of M. Fallières, he had more or less ruled in the dark, and as it were *en cachette*. When his candidate had been given the first position in the State the hour of his triumph sounded.

M. Clemenceau, in spite of all that has been said, had never been a partisan of the Russian alliance. His sympathies were entirely English. He had been the object of the special attention of King Edward, and his political plans comprised a strong Franco-English friendship, which would prove to be a shield in case of a new war with Germany.

M. Clemenceau would not have been sorry to see war. He was far too shrewd not to notice that in spite of the violent attacks of a certain portion of the press against Germany, the majority of the nation did not any longer harbour such feelings of hatred against their eastern neighbour as formerly existed. More than that, a good many people thought that it would be better to reconcile oneself to facts, and, by an understanding with the German Government, to avoid the heavy taxes which the increased armaments imposed on the country. These armaments were not popular among the greater number of Frenchmen. Forty years had gone by since the war of 1870, and a new generation had succeeded to the one that had witnessed the unexampled disasters which had brought about the fall of the Second Empire. That younger generation could not feel in the same way as its fathers had done; it only saw that France was prosperous, and that a war, even if it turned out to be successful, could but increase the military burdens of the country. This appealed to no one, and consequently a renewal of hostilities with Germany was not

desired. M. Clemenceau, on the contrary, had rabid anti-German feelings, and he encouraged what chauvinist tendencies still existed in France, and tried to persuade the leading men in England that the conclusion of an understanding with France would prove of infinite advantage to both countries.

Unfortunately Russia could not be left out of this understanding, and M. Clemenceau had perforce to submit to the fact, but he did his best, nevertheless, to destroy the Russian sympathies which existed in his fatherland by urging the newspapers which were at his disposal to say that in signing the famous Franco-Russian alliance, which had been the cause of so much joy, France had been the dupe—France who had given her money, and France who had thrown herself into the arms of Russia, whilst the latter had taken all that she had been offered, without giving anything in return for the gifts freely showered on her with a more than generous hand.

Nevertheless, M. Fallières started for St. Petersburg, as in duty bound, almost immediately after his election, conforming himself thus to the tradition which had been handed over by M. Félix Faure to his successors. He was warmly welcomed on the banks of the Neva, but welcomed only by the government and officials who followed the lead given to them by the Sovereign. The country itself remained very indifferent during his visit, and the attitude of the public was not at all what it had been when Félix Faure had arrived at Peterhof to return the memorable visit of Nicholas II. in Paris. Somehow the alliance was more accepted as an accomplished fact than as an advantage. In Russia, too, the hour of disillusion had struck.

M. Fallières, in spite of what had been said of him, was very far from being the nonentity he was reported to

be. On the contrary, he had an unusual amount of common sense, and was not slow to notice the change in the political atmosphere of the day. Nevertheless, he did his best to disguise from the public the fact of the coolness which had begun to replace the mutual enthusiasm of France and Russia for each other, but when he returned home he began to listen more than he had done formerly to the advice of M. Clemenceau, and to look towards England as a possible ally, having learnt much by his visit to Peterhof.

Although it has been reported otherwise, M. Fallières was fond of M. Clemenceau, and they got on very well together the whole time the latter remained Prime Minister. Together they worked for the benefit of M. Briand, the new star that suddenly arose in the heaven of the Third Republic, and which began to shine in great part through their efforts to assure themselves of its help and co-operation towards the final triumph of the Radical party.

I shall talk of M. Briand in the next chapter. Some people saw in him a successor of M. Fallières as President of the Republic, a conviction which personally I did not share at all, and events proved the truth of my conviction. M. Briand was far too clever to retire at that moment from political life, which still has many triumphs in store for him, and a man who has once occupied the position of Head of the State has no future after his term of office is over; he can only end his days in peace, with the broad red ribbon of the Legion of Honour across his breast as a remembrance of happy days never to return.

The reign of M. Fallières had its share of scandals. I have already spoken of M. Rochette. There were others besides, among them that provoked by the tragic adventures of Madame Steinheil, whose trial and subsequent acquittal occupied Parisian society for long months.

Several episodes of the same kind have lately occupied public attention. They have all left M. Fallières more or less indifferent, and have not ruffled his equanimity. He fulfilled his duties in an unostentatious fashion, and tried to impart as much simplicity as possible to the Presidential household. He travelled about, distributed all the hand-shakes required of him and all the medals and decorations that his ministers had awarded to their adherents. He partook of the regular number of official dinners, opened exhibitions and charitable institutions, in a word he was a model President, and it is quite possible that M. Clemenceau viewed the end of his Presidency with regret.

Madame Fallières has been the subject of all kinds of absurd stories. Notwithstanding these, she did not show herself as unfit for the part she had been called upon to play as her enemies would have us believe. She was polite with everybody, reserved in her manners, and avoided mistakes. She has done much good, and if she was not so generous as some of her predecessors had shown themselves, she never refused to give money for the cause of charity, when it was necessary, but on the contrary tried to alleviate the distresses which were brought to her notice. She did not pose for what she was not, and she always declared that when she would have to leave the Elysée, she would do so with regret at having to give up such a sumptuous home, but that at the same time she would not be sorry to return to private life and its simplicity.

M. and Mme. Fallières had several children born to them. Their only daughter was married a few years ago to M. Jean Lannes, who had been, until the day when he accompanied to the altar the daughter of his chief, the private secretary of the President of the Republic. His marriage caused a certain sensation in Republican circles,

because it was celebrated in the Church of the Madeleine, in spite of the fact that M. Fallières was supposed to be a freethinker, which in reality he was not by any means. But Madame Fallières was a fervent Catholic, and she never would have allowed her child to be married simply at the *mairie*, as it was suggested to her by some zealous friends. Madame Fallières had always the courage of her opinions, and she has showed it during her reign as the first lady of the French Republic.

Her son, André Fallières, was the subject of much talk at the time of the Steinheil affair, and some people affirmed —well, it does not matter what; it is needless to say that there was not the slightest foundation for such a story.

When M. Fallières' term of office was over, there were but three candidates possible for the position: one of them was M. Clemenceau himself; M. Pamm, a very wealthy manufacturer possessed of the vast influence which unlimited means always allow one to wield; and M. Poincaré, advocate and Academician, a man gifted with singular strength of will, strong Conservative principles, who endeavours to govern personally the country entrusted officially to his care, who has a holy horror of Radicals, and who is cordially disliked by M. Clemenceau.

This last was perhaps the very reason why M. Poincaré was elected—the Chamber and the Senate have become just a little tired of the autocracy exercised over them by the *tombeur de ministères*.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### M. Briand and the Socialists

I have mentioned M. Briand; he is certainly the most remarkable politician that France can boast at the present moment, and one who will probably rise to greater things even than those he has so far achieved. He began life as a workman in a factory, and soon made himself known by eloquent speeches, which he delivered at Socialist meetings in Lyons, St. Etienne, and other working centres in France. He had more education than people belonging to his class generally boast, and he was wise enough to understand that it was imperative that he should complete it, if he desired to play an important part in the historical development of his country—perhaps one day to rule it. Accordingly, he devoted all his spare time to that object, and refused offers to accept a seat in the Chamber of Deputies. Only when he felt sure that he could hold his own in that assembly of politicians did he entertain the idea.

M. Briand is one of the most ambitious men of his generation, and he distinguishes himself from most of his colleagues by the knowledge which he possesses of his own power, and by the extreme prudence with which he shows it in public. It is true that he likes to rule, but he does not care for people to know that he rules them. In this he differs from others in power, who are not guiltless of displaying the influence which they exercise over their political friends and disciples.

# M. Briand and the Socialists

When M. Briand entered the Chamber of Deputies, he spent the first years initiating himself into the secrets of social life, being very well aware of the importance of such things; with an energy of which very few people would have been capable he set himself to learn. He ended by becoming one of the best-groomed men in Paris. His former friends stared; at first they felt tempted to be angry. They very soon realised, however, that a deep political purpose was hidden behind this apparent flattery of society, and they began to respect him, and to talk about him as of a man born to great things. When at last he became a power in his party, and in France, and joined M. Clemenceau's ministry, they understood that he would prove a leader such as very few political parties could boast.

His ambition is defined by those who are watching his career as aiming to grasp the reins of France, and to hold them fast, until the day when he can show himself to the whole world as the strong man of France.

M. Briand has an exceptional nature. He has no illusions, either about himself or about those who surround him. He knows very well that the man who allows sentimentality to interfere with politics is lost long before he has begun to fight. He early hastened therefore to put a barrier between himself and everything that could be called by that name.

He gained his place in his party; won the votes of the electors who had sent him to the Chamber to defend their interests, without having recourse to underhand tricks; he fought his adversaries with clean hands. He won the admiration of his partners in the game he played by the audacity with which he always put himself forward when danger was ahead. He exercised influence over his colleagues in the ministry by the energy with which he defended his personal opinions, and the independence which he showed in questions

where his principles found themselves involved. And he gained the attention of his country by the strength of his personality, the calm which never forsook him in the gravest circumstances of life, and the cold determination which he brought to bear upon everything he did, and every blow which he dealt.

Enemies he had in plenty, detractors very few. Many hated him, but they did not despise him. Years ago he realised that he had succeeded in winning the respect of France, and he meant to keep it.

Too far-seeing to fail to understand that the theories by which he had been able to attain his position were utopian and would not carry him very far, M. Briand had no sympathy with the programme of destruction which the Labour party of his early days had brought forward; indeed, it looked as if he meant to sweep away that party as soon as he succeeded in gaining power and in inspiring confidence in his personality and his political principles. He had patience, a thing so rarely met with in politicians, who are always eager to see their opinions triumph without waiting for the moment when they become acceptable to the nation. He felt, moreover, that he was the only man capable of saving France from the hands of the anarchists who at that time were determined to destroy her.

He had been a workman, and had learned to appreciate the evil passions and the thirst for unreasoning destruction which not infrequently animates the mob. He knew but too well that the spread of Socialist theories would lead to nothing but the desire to overthrow everything without the possibility of putting anything else in the place of what had been trampled under foot, and he made up his mind not to lend himself to the ambitions of those who aimed at annihilation.

It is yet too early to judge whether M. Briand's plans

will ever be realised, but for those who know him as well as I do, it is pretty certain that sooner or later he will try to constitute a moderate Republican party, determined to put a stop to the progress of anarchism, and to rally around the new party the sound forces of the nation. He will then be the object of the denunciation and hatred of his friends of yesterday, who will see in him a traitor, and who will fight him with all the energy of which they are capable. They will endeavour to overthrow him as they have other idols that they have worshipped in the past.

It is probable, however, that M. Briand will not lose prestige by this cry of revenge which will certainly be raised, and that he will continue in the path which he has marked out. He is essentially an opportunist, and moreover has enough common sense not to attach himself to the success of the moment; rather he looks to the future for his ultimate triumph, a triumph he will not miss, and which will not miss him. At present the only hope France can have of the establishment of a strong, moderate Republican government, able to exist without having recourse to the votes of the Socialists, lies in M. Briand. He alone is able to stop the torrent that is threatening to carry away the existing order of things.

In M. Briand, M. Clemenceau finds a strong man with strong political opinions, but it is not likely, so long as the latter is alive, that his former pupil will come out openly against him.

M. Briand was for a short time considered the real leader of the Socialist party. This did not last very long, and perhaps he was not sorry to give up that position, and to have the opportunity of disagreeing openly with M. Jaurès, the great oracle and prophet of Socialism.

M. Jaurès is a curious personality. He is extremely rich,

and yet preaches a general division of all wealth — save his own. He is gifted with singular and powerful eloquence, and knows how to appeal to the hearts and especially to the imagination of his hearers, using a torrent of words which leaves such a deep impression on those who listen to him that they lose sight of all that is false and untrue in them. M. Jaurès is worshipped by the more fiery Socialists, who consider even Radicalism as something associated with Conservatism, and whose only creed is the destruction of everything that existed before their time.

He is ambitious of influencing others, but has no desire to rule his country, perhaps because he knows very well that the moment he would consent to enter or to form a ministry half his prestige would be gone. He is too intelligent not to understand that the moment that one has power one is bound to defend those who have given it to you as well as the principles to which one owes it. And M. Jaurès with all his eloquence is unable to defend anything; he can only attack, a thing which is easier and nine times out of ten more successful—at least in politics.

He is the type of a tribune of Roman times; he can win the masses over to his view, and knows very well how to incense them against those whom they consider to be their enemies; it is a question whether he would be able to stop these masses, should he ever desire to do so.

Very often the question has been asked whether M. Jaurès is a sincere Socialist, or whether he has declared himself to be one simply because he wanted to attract the attention of the world to his person, his opinions and his speeches. To this question it is most difficult to reply. Certainly M. Jaurès has a great deal that is theatrical in his nature, he is an actor by temperament as well as a fighter, and this has perhaps contributed more than anything else to the attitude

THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES SITTING

which he has taken in politics. Nothing gives him more pleasure than by scathing phrases to disarm his adversaries or inspire them with terror.

Strange to say, the Socialists have never reproached him for his large fortune, which he has always steadfastly refused to share with them. M. Jaurès is in their eyes a privileged person whom they allow not to practise the virtues which he preaches. They know but too well that they possess in him a strength they cannot well spare.

France, it seems to me, is a country where Socialism is rampant, and yet one where it has the least chances to seize control of the country. The explanation lies in the fact that the working classes are far from possessing the intellectual development which we find among them in Germany, or even England. Men like Virchow, Liebneckt, or Bebel are not to be found in France, where if they existed they would at once embrace the political convictions of the bourgeois class, which after all has the upper hand in that country. Frenchmen are very practical; it suits them to scream against all those who are in possession of riches, but the moment they have earned the francs which they envied in their opponents they immediately become disdainful of their former friends. All the French workmen are Socialists until they get rich, but the country itself is essentially bourgeois, and we all know that the French bourgeois is not the most unselfish of beings.

From this fact I draw the conclusion that, so long as the present love of money lasts, there is little danger of a purely Socialist government ever ruling France.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### A Few Literary Men of the Present Day

If one decides to forget the past and the great thinkers who had made the middle of last century so interesting in France, one can find great pleasure in knowing some of the literary men of the present day in Paris. They are always amusing, and perhaps the art of small talk is practised by them more brilliantly than among their predecessors. Anatole France, Octave Mirbeau, and Pierre Loti are among the foremost novelists, and for those who have given themselves over to historical studies the Marquis de Ségur is the most acceptable name. I must also give grateful mention to such as Guy de Maupassant and Flaubert—the great Flaubert, whom so many have tried to imitate, but whom few could approach either as regards his talent or his thorough knowledge of the French language.

The well known Octave Mirbeau began his literary career as the secretary of Arthur Meyer, the director and present owner of the *Gaulois*. He has a profound belief in his own work, and with some justice. He certainly is clever, and the talent with which he describes in his novels what he has not felt is such as one but seldom meets nowadays. His books are remarkable, and they awake passionate interest in their readers, even though they are so strong with realism that they repel many. They are highly imaginative, and provoke not only curiosity but also the desire to read them over again as soon as one has finished them.

From being quite unknown Octave Mirbeau has risen high in the literary firmament of his country and his generation. He soon made his name, gossip saying that he kept himself before his contemporaries by his sharp criticisms of everybody and everything he did not like, or he thought did not like him. He spared no one. Nevertheless he became famous in Paris and throughout France. He succeeded, therefore, in making his books popular.

M. Mirbeau began as a poor man; quickly, however, he earned for himself a large fortune, partly through his books, partly through successful operations on the Stock Exchange, and partly by marriage. M. Mirbeau lives in clover in one of the finest apartments of the Avenue du Bois, and on the lovely property which he possesses at Cormeilles-en-Vexin, near Paris. He gives dinners now and then, and has always been upon excellent terms with the wife to whom he owes so much of his worldly goods. He likes to see at his hospitable hearth the people of whose admiration he feels sure, and honoured me once with an invitation to lunch when I least expected it, for we had never been very friendly towards each other.

I shall never forget that lunch. There were only four of us, the host and hostess, Rodin the sculptor, and myself. When I arrived I was introduced in the study, where the first thing which struck my eyes was the bust of Mirbeau himself on the mantelpiece. As I looked at it, after having exchanged the first greetings with the people in the room, Madame Mirbeau turned to me, and said in her softest accents—and she has a delightfully soft voice: "You are looking at my husband's bust; it is the work of our great master here," and she turned towards Rodin.

The latter raised himself slightly from the depths of the large arm-chair in which he was ensconced beside the fire,

and looking at me, murmured dreamily: "Ah, it is not everybody's bust I care to do, but when one meets with a remarkable personality like our great writer here, it is a pleasure for an artist to reproduce his features."

He sighed as he spoke, and Mirbeau's face lighted up as he said in his turn: "I never hoped for such a reward for all my work as to be thought worthy of the attention of our great master."

And then Madame Mirbeau began again: "Ah, it is not often that two great souls like our two great masters here present meet and think together."

Lunch was announced, and Rodin rose, and directed his steps towards the dining-room. Fearing that I might step before him, Mirbeau stopped me by laying his hand upon my arm, saying as he did so: "Laissez passer le maître, notre maître à tous!"

And this kind of thing went on during the whole meal. Rodin praised Mirbeau, Mirbeau praised Rodin, and Madame Mirbeau praised both of them. One heard nothing but "cher maître," and "ce grand maître," and "notre grand maître"—I began to think that I had been invited to assist at the canonisation of Rodin by Mirbeau, and of Mirbeau by Rodin, or of both by Mirbeau's wife.

Anatole France has a fluent and correct French diction, but whilst admiring him, I cannot forget that there have been other great thinkers, writers, and philosophers, not only in France but also in Europe. And this is what his worshippers won't admit. St. Simon will always provide enjoyment for the people who wade through his pages; Renan's works will always remain a model of fine language, and of noble thoughts nobly expressed; Thiers's history of the Consulate and the Empire will always be consulted by those who care for the past and all it has seen and witnessed.

I doubt very much whether the life of Jeanne d'Arc will ever become a classic work.

Apart from this liking for the congenial atmosphere of praise, Anatole France is a charming man, full of humour, amusing in the extreme, his conversation sparkling with witty anecdotes and *bons mots*, which he utters now and then when one least expects them. He has a wonderful memory, and when all is said and done possesses a great deal of kindness in his judgments, with a considerable indulgence towards his neighbours. He has none of the sharpness of language of Mirbeau, and is more a gentleman. His manner with women is a model of its kind; he treats them with a chivalry which savours of the days of old, when men still died for the ladies of their heart. M. Anatole France, taken on the whole, is certainly a person worth knowing, and is one of the most charming men in Paris at the present day.

I don't think that I met Flaubert more than a couple of times, but he left on my mind an impression that probably nothing will ever efface. There was real genius in his face, and, in spite of a certain tendency to grumble at everything and at everybody, he could be a charming companion. He was the inventor of the Naturalistic school, and unfortunately others tried to copy him, with the appalling result which we who live in France have seen. But nothing could be more amusing than to witness his rage when shown the distasteful manuscript of some talentless young man, and being told that it was supposed to be an imitation of his style. He used to burst into real fury, and declare that if this was going to be the result of his arduous work, he would rather throw in the fire all that he had ever written. Flaubert was not devoid of ideals, and though he believed that novels ought to describe life, he did not think that they must depict

every phase of the material side of it. He was a great genius, and what was allowed to him would not be tolerated in others.

Pierre Loti is another genius in his way. In his charming, lovely books each line breathes with a deep, real talent. Some of his descriptions show us certain spots and places with such vividness that it is almost possible to think one has seen them too. There are passages in "Mon Frère Yves," in "Désanchantées," in "Le Pélerin d'Angkok," and especially in that delightful and profound work, "Le Livre de la Pitié et de la Mort," the like of which have perhaps never been written before in the French language. But the man himself is anything but sympathetic. He thinks far too much of his own genius, and his affectation jars on the nerves. I have never been able to understand why the people who write clever books should consider themselves as made of superior clay to other mortals, and I feel inclined to laugh always whenever I see an author affect habits, language, and general demeanour different from those of common humanity simply on account of the tales which he has composed, thanks to the intelligence and cleverness that Providence has given to him, and which it might just as well have given to someone else.

A man who did not think himself something extraordinary, and who, perhaps, had more genius in his little finger than others in their whole body, was Guy de Maupassant, that cruel observer of the human heart who understood so well the feelings of his generation, and who was to die so miserably, first losing that intellect which had made him such a strong man and such a remarkable writer. There was a time when I often saw him, and his death grieved me very much more than I could even have supposed.

Emile Augier and Jules Claretie belonged still to a genera-

tion where self-praise was absent. The last-mentioned writer was perhaps one of the greatest workers of his time. I often wondered at the activity which allowed him to fulfil his duties as director of the Comédie Française, to write the charming *feuilletons* which the *Temps* publish every week, and to do all this apart from innumerable other things, among which the composition of novels holds a place.

There have been many who grumbled in public at the manner in which Claretie administered the Comédie Française, perhaps they would have grumbled just as much if someone else had been in his place. The post was not an easy one, for it required an amount of tact such as is not to be found everywhere. But what cannot be denied is that he filled it like the gentleman he was, and that he insisted on his staff behaving like gentlemen and ladies so long as they remained under his control. He gave to his theatre an air of dignity and of correctness which put it high above any other in Paris.

Another man who could be classed in the same category as Jules Claretie was the Vicomte de Vogué, also a member of the Academy, and a writer imbued with the grand traditions of the seventeenth century when La Rochefoucauld wrote his maxims and La Bruyère his philosophical meditations on the foibles of mankind. M. de Vogué can be classed among the best authors of the latter part of the nineteenth century, and his books will always be read with pleasure when those of other authors will be entirely forgotten.

There are just a few writers of the same style left among the ranks of the French Academy, such as the Marquis de Ségur, whom I have already mentioned, but unfortunately that learned assembly has deteriorated, and has welcomed to its bosom literary men of a very inferior rank.

I will not put among them M. Paul Bourget, who, though

his books have sadly gone out of fashion, is an active, charming writer full of the spirit of observation. I find myself thinking of him, however, as an author who wanted to imitate Balzac, and who imagined that he had written a sequel to the " Comédie Humaine," whilst in reality he had only described the comedy of a certain small circle of Parisian smart society, which has already changed so much that one cannot recognise a single known person among those he tried to describe so faithfully.

Marcel Prévost is also among the men I have often met, and I liked him very much. He was modest; he did not always speak of his personal perfections, and did not think that the fact of his having been elected a member of the French Academy relieved him from study or from honest hard work. He was also a delightful companion. Few men are living to-day who are better informed as to the virtues or the vices of his generation; he has a thorough knowledge of the human heart, he realises the artificiality of the society among which he lives, and also its follies, for which his indulgence is seldom lacking.

There is much earnestness in the talent of M. Marcel Prévost, far more than in the sketches, for one can hardly call them anything else, of Abel Hermant, who poses for the satirist of his time and of his generation, and who forgets that one could often find much about himself to satirise.

I will not do more than mention the modern playwrights such as Henri Bataille, Alfred Capus, Henri Bernstein, Francis du Croisset, and so on. They write in order to make money, and of course must compose dramatic pieces which can bring it to them. They are more or less *cabotins* themselves, owing to the influence of the many actors with whom their whole life is spent, and they often mistake life for a comedy,

which unfortunately it is not, introducing drama when it is not needed. Still, I hardly see how they could avoid it, living, as everybody does, in an artificial atmosphere. The greatest actors in Paris indeed are those who do not appear on the stage.

It is impossible to pass actresses by in silence; they rule Paris with a rod of iron, and are given far more importance than the highest born. Artists like Madame Sarah Bernhardt, Réjane, Jane Hading, or the " divine " Bartet, as she is called, of the Comédie Française, without mentioning Cecile Sorel, who is something else besides an actress of unrivalled talent, are all the objects of far more attention than a queen would be should she appear in the circles in which these ladies live. One looks up to them not only as clever, talented artists, but also the supreme mistresses of fashion; as examples to be imitated by all those who can do so; as the most fascinating, interesting women in Paris. Their dresses, their hats, their jewels, carriages, and sumptuous apartments are described in all the newspapers; their movements are chronicled as if they were empresses.

Among all these fair, charming creatures, Madame Bartet is certainly the most ladylike, not only in her person, but also in her tastes and quiet refinement. She has been lucky enough to keep her youth at an age when most other women have long ago forgotten that they ever had such a possession, and her slight figure, her lovely complexion, despite her more than fifty years, make her look always young and altogether charming. Sarah Bernhardt is a great-grandmother, yet she also can play the Dame aux Camélias without appearing ridiculous in the eyes of her old admirers. She is perhaps the greatest actress that France has produced since Rachel, but I cannot say that I ever found her sympathetic. To my mind she screams far too much, and is not natural in her

conception of the many heroines which she represents. But she is so charming as a woman of the world, so interesting in her intercourse, that I am quite ready to say that it is I who have bad taste, and that all she does is perfection itself.

Réjane is something quite different; there is more real passion in her acting, though much less refinement. She is vulgar, and the heaviness of her whole person adds to that first impression; but she knows how to represent the different feelings of joy, despair, sorrow, anger and rage that can shake a human creature. She is life itself whenever she appears on the stage, not life seen through rose-coloured spectacles, but life as we have unfortunately to live and to bear it.

Jeanne Granier is still a favourite with the Parisian public, though her lovely voice has become worn, and her increasing stoutness has done away with her former grace.

Jane Hading was also at one moment the rage, but she did not remain a long time the fashion, though we still see her name on the programmes of different theatres. She certainly played well, but tried too much to imitate Sarah, which did not always agree with her style of beauty, to which, let it be said *en passant*, she owed most of her successes rather than to her talent, which was not that of a tragedienne by any means.

As for Cecile Sorel, she is an exception among actresses, just as much as she is an exception among women. She has often reminded me of the Duchesse de Longueville and those other ladies of the time of the Fronde who led men to victory or to death. Her beauty is something quite extraordinary, more by its originality than by its perfection. She is the incarnation of feminine charm, and clever in mind as well as cultured and well-bred. Her whole demeanour is that of a *grande dame*.

And actors, you will ask me, actors such as Guitry, or Le Bargy or Mounet Sully, what do you think of them? I think nothing, because I do not know them. In my time one kissed the pretty fingers of a lovely actress, but one did not invite actors to one's house. I have kept to this tradition, and do not regret it.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### A Few Foreign Diplomats

During the quarter of a century that I lived in Paris I was fated to see many changes among the Diplomatic Corps, first at the Court of Napoleon III., and afterwards at the Elysée. I must say that in all the diplomatic circle I seldom found unpleasant or rude colleagues, but that, on the contrary, I have met most charming men and women whom it was a privilege and an honour to know. It is impossible to speak of them all, but there are a few figures which have left such a vivid remembrance in my mind that I must mention them.

I think I have spoken of Prince and Princess Metternich; they were great favourites with the Empress Eugénie, and another Ambassador who shared her affections was Count Nigra, one of the ablest diplomats Italy could ever boast. A faithful servant and pupil of the great Cavour, he watched on his behalf everything that was going on in France, and helped the unfortunate Empress in her flight, or rather did not help her, because his intervention, together with that of his Austrian colleague, consisted in advising her to run away, and perhaps even in obliging her to do so, from a feeling that later on it would be easier to get a revolutionary government to shut its eyes to the advance of the Italian troops on Rome, and their conquest of the Eternal City.

Count Nigra was a charming man. It was said that one could never believe anything he said, or rely upon anything he promised. But apart from this he was the pleasantest

colleague one could have, and contrived to remain on good terms with all those he knew, even when in diplomacy he had cheated them of something or other. After he left Paris, I met him in Vienna and in St. Petersburg, and was always delighted to have those opportunities.

Lord Lyons spent long years in Paris, and represented the government of Queen Victoria with great dignity. He was a gentleman and also a most able diplomat, and whilst he stayed at the Faubourg St. Honoré, Anglo-French relations remained excellent in spite of the many attempts made to spoil them. His successors also left excellent memories behind them when their term of office came to an end; and Lord Lytton especially had contrived to make for himself many friends among French society, which at that time did not look upon foreigners with the same enthusiasm it professes to-day. Lord Lytton was a scholar, a writer and also a statesman, a combination one does not meet frequently in our age of mediocrities. He was a great friend, and, I think, also a distant relation, of Lord Salisbury, who had firm confidence in his abilities; he enjoyed greater latitude than other Ambassadors had done or did later on.

I will say nothing about Count Arnim. We were never intimate or even on friendly terms with each other. He was extremely stiff, and had a considerable amount of the *morgue prussienne* in his ways, so that very few people sympathised with him or with his opinions. Nevertheless, his trial, and the long war which Prince Bismarck waged against him, aroused an interest in his fate which would not have existed under different circumstances. But, all the same, one was not sorry when Prince Hohenlohe succeeded him. The Prince was received with a certain amount of kind feeling such as could not have been expected under ordinary conditions.

Prince Hohenlohe was one of the greatest among the grand seigneurs in Germany. He was related to the Royal Family of Prussia and to almost all the crowned heads in Europe. He had been President of the Bavarian ministry, and as such had shown great devotion to the cause of German unity. His character had always been above reproach, his tact was exquisite, and his straightforwardness was recognised even among the enemies of his political ideas and opinions. He was essentially a man of duty, and he never failed in its fulfilment, no matter how painful this might be. All those who knew him respected him, and when he was sent to Paris as Ambassador, it was felt among the diplomatic circles of Europe that his presence there would help to do away with many prejudices and misunderstandings.

I was a frequent visitor at the house of Prince Clovis, as we called him familiarly, and whenever I left him it was with admiration for his shrewd intelligence and the logic displayed in all his reasonings and appreciations of men and of events. He had very few illusions, but at the same time an excessive kindness in all his judgments of other people. Ill-nature was unknown to him, and he was always ready to find excuses for the mistakes he could not help noticing in his neighbours. Prince Hohenlohe was infinitely above all his contemporaries in everything, both as a private and as a public man, and in all the high offices which he held he won for himself the esteem and the affection of all who had to do with him.

He made himself liked, too, in Paris in those first years which followed upon the war, in spite of the natural prejudice which existed against everything German. He had some relatives in the Faubourg St. Germain, where both he and his wife were received with more cordiality than in official circles, and he felt more or less at home among them. This

fact made him cling to his Paris mission, where it was felt at the time that it would be difficult to replace him, and where, later on, his appointment as Chancellor of the German Empire was received with a certain amount of sympathy.

Princess Hohenlohe was a fitting wife for that distinguished man. She was also a *grande dame*, highly born and highly connected, with some of the bluest blood in Europe flowing in her veins. She admirably filled her position as Ambassadress, and she made for herself in France, as everywhere else, a considerable number of friends.

Prince Hohenlohe's successor, Count Munster, as I think I have already remarked, was in appearance more an Englishman than a German. His wife had been English, and he affected great sympathies for everything that was British, loving London, where he always declared he spent the happiest time of his life, and crossing the Channel whenever he found it possible to do so. He was in Paris at the time of the Dreyfus affair, and contrived not to make for himself too many enemies, in spite of the difficult position and circumstances in which he found himself during that anxious period. Among diplomats he was liked, his advice being always appreciated and mostly followed. I cannot say the same thing about his successor, Prince Radolin, formerly Count Radolinski, who, in spite of the many years he remained in Paris, did not succeed in attaining the great position which had belonged to Prince Hohenlohe or to Count Munster

During the latter's tenure of the German Embassy, the present Prince von Bülow was one of his secretaries. Intelligent, clever in noticing what ought to be noticed, and in not seeing the things which apparently did not concern him, he contrived to keep himself exceedingly well *au courant* of all that was going on around him, and of the intentions and designs of French diplomacy. He was a man singularly

unprejudiced, for whom the end always justified the means. He may perhaps have had too high an opinion of his own merits, and too much confidence in his power to do always what he liked and wanted. He could make himself very charming when he saw a personal advantage, and he was constantly on the look out for the things that others did not see or did not care to notice. His admiration for Prince Bismarck was unbounded, and he fondly nursed an ambition to replace him as Chancellor of the German Empire. Even at the time when he was a simple secretary at the Paris Embassy, he told a friend of his that he would probably never become an ambassador, but might, if circumstances favoured him, come to be at the head of Germany's foreign policy.

Prince Bülow, who fell from his high position because he had not understood the character of the Emperor William II., and imagined that the latter would not notice or would forgive him for trying to keep him in leading-strings, married one of the most distinguished women in Europe, an Italian by birth, and the daughter of the Princesse de Camporeale. Madame Bülow was the wife of another German diplomat, Count Donhoff, when she made the acquaintance of the future Chancellor. No one can doubt his love for the beautiful and intelligent woman who at present is his wife.

The first Ambassador whom Russia sent to Paris after the signature of peace with Germany was Prince Orloff, one of her greatest noblemen. His exalted position and high moral character put him above any suspicion of playing a double game between France and Prussia, and he had, moreover, the advantage of being a personal friend of President Thiers. He remained at his post for something like ten years, and when he was removed to Berlin, at the express desire of Prince Bismarck, his departure was mourned by all those who knew him.

Of his successor, Baron Mohrenheim, I shall say no more than that he had a very complex personality. He was not liked in France nor in Russia; it is said that he only kept his post because he enjoyed the protection of the Empress Marie Feodorovna, the Consort of Alexander III.

It was M. Nelidoff who replaced him, and who remained in possession of the Russian Embassy in Paris until his death. M. Nelidoff was a diplomat of the old school, who had spent almost his whole career in the East, and who had served under Count Ignatieff in Constantinople, accompanying him to San Stefano, where his signature figures on the famous treaty which was signed there, and which Europe did not consent to accept. He was not a man who would shrink with horror when seeing something dirty under his feet, but rather one who would try not to step into it. No one knew better than he did how to get over a difficulty, or how to avoid a mistake. He can certainly be considered as an able diplomat, and certainly also he cut a better figure in Paris than his successor, M. Izvolski, whom wicked tongues in St. Petersburg nicknamed Izvostchik, which means a cabdriver.

Prince Orloff had had for private secretary during his stay in Paris Count Mouravieff, whom he took with him to Berlin, and who was ultimately to be put in possession of the Russian Foreign Office after the unexpected death of Prince Labanoff. Count Mouravieff was one of the most charmingly amiable men that Russian diplomacy ever possessed. His tact was something surpassing, and his cleverness, which had no shade of pedantry mixed with it, made him delightful. He has been accused of many things, including that of not being either a good or a faithful friend. I have had occasion to see that this was a most unjust and untrue reproach, because Count Muravieff, far from deserting those who had been his companions, when their worldly star did not shine any longer as

brightly as it had done, was, on the contrary, always eager to oblige them in anything that he could possibly do for them, and kept up his relations with them sometimes even at the cost of some personal sacrifices. He was not liked by those who saw in him a possible rival, his quick career interfering with their own, but the few who knew him well esteemed him as much as they appreciated his intelligence and his pleasant conversation.

I must, before ending with these few words of remembrance that I have given of my former colleagues, say something about the Italian Ambassador, Count Tornielli, or rather about his wife, who was a Russian by birth, a Countess Rostopschine, the granddaughter of that Count Rostopschine who burned Moscow rather than give it up to Napoleon. She was an amiable woman, whose house was always open to her compatriots; one who had kept a great attachment for the land of her birth, and whose salon was a favourite resort for those who cared more for clever conversation than for polo or for tennis. She had a sister, the Countess Lydie Rostopschine, who has written several books full of interest, among them one called " Rastaquèropolis," which is the best description that has ever been published of Nice society and in general of the life and the people of the French Riviera.

## L'ENVOI

When I think of all those bright, happy days I spent in Paris I regret often that I cannot live them over again. I had hoped to be allowed to end my days on the banks of the Seine, in the gay city which has always proved so attractive to Russians. St. Petersburg did not interest me any longer. Its climate is far too severe for my old lungs and my everlasting rheumatism, and all the persons who were my friends in the old days have either died or disappeared from the social horizon. Fate ruled it otherwise, and my seventy-five years have not been allowed to remain in Paris where they believed they had found a home. An Imperial order removes me to another place where very probably I shall miss the attractions of Paris, and the resources which it offers to a bookworm like myself. Before going away I have read over again the reminiscences that in my idle moments I have scribbled for the benefit of those who care to read them when I am gone, and I have found a melancholy pleasure in doing so. It has been such a happy time, even for a misanthrope like myself. Each time I have left Paris it has been a joy to return, and to look once more on the familiar haunts where I used to walk in company with friends who, alas! have already gone. Would that I could follow them on that journey whence no one returns, before leaving Paris for ever; because at my age one cannot hope for anything that the morrow may bring along with it—this wonderful Paris,

where is so much of what constituted my former pleasures, will remain buried. Russia can only increase my melancholy, it is so different from what it was when I was young, and when the sadness of the snow which covered its ground found no echo in my young heart.

Count Vassili's wish was realised. He died just before his intended departure from the Paris he had loved so well.

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